



BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER.

VOL. II.



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BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER

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FEVERELL," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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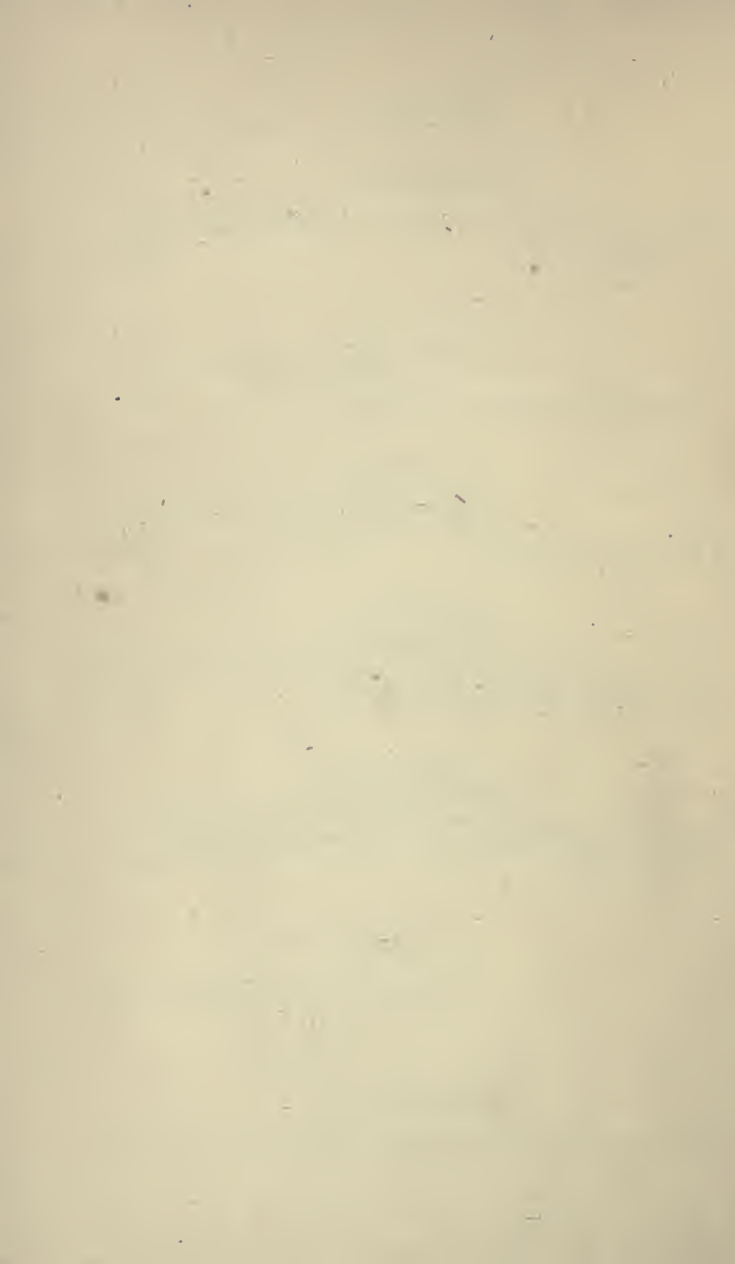
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BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER.

CHAPTER I.

A DAY AT ITCHINCOPE.

AN election in Bevisham was always an exciting period at Itchincope, the large and influential old estate of the Lespels, which at one time, with but a ceremonious drive through the town, sent you two good Whig men to Parliament to sit at Reform banquets; two unswerving party men, blest subscribers to the right Review, and personally proud of its trenchancy. Mr. Grancey Lespel was the survivor of them, and well could he remember the happier day of his grandfather, his father, and his own hot youth. He could be carried so far by affectionate regrets as to think of the Tories of that day benignly:—when his champion Review of the orange and blue livery waved a wondrous sharp knife, and stuck and bled them, proving to his party, by trenchancy alone, that the Whig was the

cause of Providence. Then politics presented you a table whereat two parties feasted, with no fear of the intrusion of a third, and your backs were turned on the noisy lower world, your ears were deaf to it.

Apply we now the knocker to the door of venerable Quotation, and call the aged creature forth, that he, half choked by his eheu !—

‘A sound between a sigh and bray,’

may pronounce the familiar but respectable words, the burial-service of a time so happy !

Mr. Grancey Lespel would still have been sitting for Bevisham (or politely at this elective moment bowing to resume the seat) had not those Manchester jugglers caught up his cry, appropriated his colours, displaced and impersonated him, acting beneficent Whig on a scale approaching treason to the Constitution ; leaning on the people in earnest, instead of taking the popular shoulder for a temporary lift, all in high party policy, for the clever manœuvre, to oust the Tory and sway the realm. See the consequences. For power, for no other consideration, those manufacturing rascals have raised Radicalism from its primeval mire—from its petty backslum bookseller's shop and public-house back-

parlour effluvia of oratory—to issue dictates in England, and we, England, formerly the oak, are topsy-turvy, like onions, our heels in the air!

The language of party is eloquent, and famous for being grand at illustration; but it is equally well known that much of it gives us humble ideas of the speaker, probably because of the naughty temper party is prone to; which, while endowing it with vehemence, lessens the stout circumferential view that should be taken, at least historically. Indeed, though we admit party to be the soundest method for conducting us, party talk soon expends its attractiveness, as would a summer's afternoon given up to the contemplation of an encounter of rams' heads. Let us be quit of Mr. Grancey Lespel's lamentations. The Whig gentleman had some reason to complain. He had been trained to expect no other attack than that of his hereditary adversary—ram in front, and a sham ram—no honest animal, but a ramming-engine rather—had attacked him in the rear. Like Mr. Everard Romfrey and other Whigs, he was profoundly chagrined by popular ingratitude: “not the same man,” his wife said of him. It nipped him early. He took to proverbs; sure sign of the sere leaf in a man's mind.

His wife reproached the people for their behaviour

to him bitterly. The lady regarded politics as a business that helped hunting-men a stage above sportsmen, for numbers of the politicians she was acquainted with were hunting-men, yet something more by virtue of the variety they could introduce into a conversation ordinarily treating of sport and the qualities of wines. Her husband seemed to have lost in that Parliamentary seat the talisman which gave him notions distinguishing him from country squires; he had sunk, and he no longer cared for the months in London, nor for the speeches she read to him to re-awaken his mind and make him look out of himself, as he had done when he was a younger man and not a suspended Whig. Her own favourite reading was of love-adventures written in the French tongue. She had once been in love, and could be so sympathetic with that passion as to avow to Cecilia Halkett a tenderness for Nevil Beauchamp, on account of his relations with the Marquise de Rouaillout, and notwithstanding the demoniacal flame-halo of the Radical encircling him.

The allusion to Beauchamp occurred a few hours after Cecilia's arrival at Itchincope.

Cecilia begged for the French lady's name to be repeated; she had not heard it before, and she tasted the strange bitter relish of realisation when

it struck her ear to confirm a story that she believed indeed, but had not quite sensibly felt.

"And it is not over yet, they say," Mrs. Grancey Lespel added, while softly flipping some spots of the colour proper to radicals in morals on the fame of the French lady. She possessed fully the grave judicial spirit of her countrywomen, and could sit in judgment on the personages of tales which had entranced her, to condemn the heroines: it was impolitic in her sex to pity females. As for the men—poor weak things! As for Nevil Beauchamp in particular, his case, this penetrating lady said, was clear: he ought to be married. "Could *you* make a sacrifice?" she asked Cecilia playfully.

"Nevil Beauchamp and I are old friends, but we have agreed that we are deadly political enemies," Miss Halkett replied.

"It is not so bad for a beginning," said Mrs. Lespel.

"If one were disposed towards martyrdom."

The older woman nodded. "Without that."

"My dear Mrs. Lespel, wait till you have heard him. He is at war with everything we venerate and build on. The wife you would give him should be a creature rooted in nothing—in sea-water. Simply two or three conversations with him have made me uncomfortable ever since; I can see nothing durable;

I dream of surprises, outbreaks, dreadful events. At least it is perfectly true that I do not look with the same eyes on my country. He seems to delight in destroying one's peaceful contemplation of life. The truth is that he blows a perpetual gale, and is all agitation," Cecilia concluded, affecting with a smile a slight shiver.

"Yes, one tires of that," said Mrs. Lespel. "I was determined I would have him here if we could get him to come. Grancey objected. We shall have to manage Captain Beauchamp and the rest as well. He is sure to come late to-morrow, and will leave early on Thursday morning for his canvass; our driving into Bevisham is for Friday or Saturday. I do not see that he need have any suspicions. Those verses you are so angry about cannot be traced to Itchincope. My dear, they are a childish trifle. When my husband stood first for Bevisham, the whole of his University life appeared in print. What we have to do is to forewarn the gentlemen to be guarded, and especially in what they say to my nephew Lord Palmet, for that boy cannot keep a secret; he is as open as a plate."

"The smoking-room at night?" Cecilia suggested, remembering her father's words about Itchincope's tobacco-hall.

“They have Captain Beauchamp’s address hung up there, I have heard,” said Mrs. Lespel. “There may be other things—another address, though it is not yet placarded. Come with me. For fifteen years I have never once put my head into that room, and now I’ve a superstitious fear about it.”

Mrs. Lespel led the way to the deserted smoking-room, where the stale reek of tobacco assailed the ladies, as does that dire place of Customs the stranger visiting savage (or too-natural) potentates.

In silence they tore down from the wall Beauchamp’s electoral Address—flanked all its length with satirical pen and pencil comments and sketches; and they consigned to flames the vast sheet of animated verses relating to the FRENCH MARQUEES. A quarter-size chalk-drawing of a slippered pantaloon having a duck on his shoulder, labelled to say ‘Quack-quack,’ and offering our nauseated Dame Britannia (or else it was the widow Bevisham) a globe of a pill to swallow, that was crossed with the consolatory and reassuring name of *Shrapnel*, they disposed of likewise. And then they fled, chased forth either by the brilliancy of the politically allusive epigrams profusely inscribed around them on the walls, or by the atmosphere. Mrs. Lespel gave her orders for the walls to be

scraped, and said to Cecilia: "A strange air to breathe, was it not? The less men and women know of one another, the happier for them. I knew my superstition was correct as a guide to me. I do so much wish to respect men, and all my experience tells me the Turks know best how to preserve it. Two men in this house would give their wives for pipes, if it came to the choice. We might all go for a cellar of old wine. After forty, men have married their habits, and wives are only an item in the list, and not the most important."

With the assistance of Mr. Stukely Culbrett, Mrs. Lespel prepared the house and those of the company who were in the secret of affairs for the arrival of Beauchamp. The ladies were curious to see him. The gentlemen, not anticipating extreme amusement, were calm: for it is an axiom in the world of buckskins and billiard-cues, that one man is very like another; and so true is it with them, that they can in time teach it to the sex. Friends of Cecil Baskellett predominated, and the absence of so sprightly a fellow was regretted seriously; but he was shooting with his uncle at Holdesbury, and they did not expect him before Thursday.

On Wednesday morning Lord Palmet presented himself at a remarkably well-attended breakfast-

table at Itchincope. He passed from Mrs. Lespel to Mrs. Wardour-Devereux and Miss Halkett, bowed to other ladies, shook hands with two or three men, and nodded over the heads of half-a-dozen, accounting rather mysteriously for his delay in coming, it was thought, until he sat down before a plate of Yorkshire pie, and said: "The fact is I've been canvassing hard. With Beauchamp!"

Astonishment and laughter surrounded him, and Palmet looked from face to face, equally astonished, and desirous to laugh too.

"Ernest! how could you do that?" said Mrs. Lespel; and her husband cried in stupefaction, "With Beauchamp?"

"Oh! it's because of the Radicalism," Palmet murmured to himself. "I didn't mind that."

"What sort of a day did you have?" Mr. Culbrett asked him; and several gentlemen fell upon him for an account of the day.

Palmet grimaced over a mouthful of his pie.

"Bad!" quoth Mr. Lespel; "I knew it. I know Bevisham. The only chance there is for five thousand pounds in a sack with a hole in it."

"Bad for Beauchamp? Dear me, no;" Palmet corrected the error. "He is carrying all before him. And he tells them," Palmet mimicked Beau-

champ, "they shall not have one penny; not a farthing. I gave a couple of young ones a shilling apiece, and he rowed me for bribery; somehow I did wrong."

Lord Palmet described the various unearthly characters he had inspected in their dens: Carpendike, Tripehallow, and the radicals Peter Molyneux and Samuel Killick, and the ex-member for the borough, Cougham, posing to suit sign-boards of Liberal inns, with a hand thrust in his waistcoat, and his head well up, the eyes running over the under lids, after the traditional style of our aristocracy; but perhaps more closely resembling an urchin on tiptoe peering above park-palings. Cougham's remark to Beauchamp, heard and repeated by Palmet with the object of giving an example of the senior Liberal's phraseology: "I was necessitated to vacate my town mansion, to my material discomfort and that of my wife, whose equipage I have been compelled to take, by your premature canvass of the borough, Captain Beauchamp; and now I hear, on undeniable authority, that no second opponent to us will be forthcoming:"—this produced the greatest effect on the company.

"But do you tell me," said Mr. Lespel, when the shouts of the gentlemen were subsiding, "do

you tell me that young Beauchamp is going ahead?"

"That he is. They flock to him in the street."

"He stands there, then, and jingles a money-bag."

Palmet resumed his mimicry of Beauchamp: "Not a stiver; purity of election is the first condition of instruction to the people! Principles! Then they've got a capital orator; Turbot, an Irishman. I went to a meeting last night, and heard him; never heard anything finer in my life. You may laugh—he whipped me off my legs; fellow spun me like a top; and while he was orationing, a donkey calls, 'Turbot! ain't you a flat fish?' and he swings round, 'Not for a fool's hook!' and out they hustled the villain for a Tory. I never saw anything like it."

"That repartee wouldn't have done with a Dutchman or a Torbay trawler," said Stukely Culbrett. "But let us hear more."

"Is it fair?" Miss Halkett murmured anxiously to Mrs. Lespel, who returned a flitting shrug.

"Charming women follow Beauchamp, you know," Palmet proceeded, as he conceived, to confirm and heighten the tale of success. "There's a Miss Denham, niece of a doctor, a Dr. . . . Shot—Shrapnel!

a wonderfully good-looking, clever-looking girl, comes across him in half-a-dozen streets to ask how he's getting on, and goes every night to his meetings, with a man who's a writer and has a mad wife; a man named Lydia—no, that's a woman—Lydiard. It's rather a jumble; but you should see her when Beauchamp's on his legs and speaking."

"Mr. Lydiard is in Bevisham?" Mrs. Wardour-Devereux remarked.

"I know the girl," growled Mr. Lespel. "She comes with that rascally doctor and a bobtail of tea-drinking men and women and their brats to Northeden Heath—my ground. There they stand and sing."

"Hymns?" inquired Mr. Culbrett.

"I don't know what they sing. And when it rains they take the liberty to step over my bank into my plantation. Some day I shall have them stepping into my house."

"Yes, it's Mr. Lydiard; I'm sure of the man's name," Palmet replied to Mrs. Wardour-Devereux.

"We met him in Spain the year before last," she observed to Cecilia.

The 'we' reminded Palmet that her husband was present.

"Ah, Devereux, I didn't see you," he nodded

obliquely down the table. "By the way, what's the grand procession? I hear my man, Davis, has come all right, and I caught sight of the top of your coach-box in the stable-yard as I came in. What are we up to?"

"Baskett writes, it's to be for to-morrow morning at ten—the start." Mr. Wardour-Devereux addressed the table generally. He was a fair, huge, bush-bearded man, with a voice of unvarying bass: a squire in his county, and energetic in his pursuit of the pleasures of hunting, driving, travelling, and tobacco.

"Old Bask's the captain of us? Very well, but where do we drive the teams? How many are we? What's in hand?"

Cecilia threw a hurried glance at her hostess.

Luckily some witling said, "Fours-in-hand!" and so drily that it passed for humour, and gave Mrs. Lespel time to interpose. "You are not to know till to-morrow, Ernest."

Palmet had traced the authorship of the sally to Mr. Algy Borolick, and crowned him with praise for it. He asked, "Why not know till to-morrow?" A word in a murmur from Mr. Culbrett, "Don't frighten the women," satisfied him, though why it should he could not have imagined.

Mrs. Lespel quitted the breakfast-table before the setting in of the dangerous five minutes of conversation over its ruins, and spoke to her husband, who contested the necessity for secrecy, but yielded to her judgment when it was backed by Stukely Culbrett. Soon afterwards Lord Palmet found himself encountered by evasions and witticisms, in spite of the absence of the ladies, upon every attempt he made to get some light regarding the destination of the four-in-hands next day.

"What are you going to do?" he said to Mr. Devereux, thinking him the likeliest one to grow confidential in private.

"Smoke," resounded from the depths of that gentleman.

Palmet recollected the ground of division between the beautiful brunette and her lord—his addiction to the pipe in perpetuity, and deemed it sweeter to be with the lady.

She and Miss Halkett were walking in the garden.

Miss Halkett said to him: "How wrong of you to betray the secrets of your friend! Is he really making way?"

"Beauchamp will head the poll to a certainty," Palmet replied.

"Still," said Miss Halkett, "you should not

forget that you are not in the house of a Liberal. Did you canvass in the town or the suburbs?"

"Everywhere. I assure you, Miss Halkett, there's a feeling for Beauchamp—they're in love with him!"

"He promises them everything, I suppose?"

"Not he. And the odd thing is, it isn't the Radicals he catches. He won't go against the game laws for them, and he won't cut down army and navy. So the Radicals yell at him. One confessed he had sold his vote for five pounds last election: 'you shall have it for the same,' says he, 'for you're all humbugs.' Beauchamp took him by the throat and shook him—metaphorically, you know. But as for the tradesmen, he's their hero; bakers especially."

"Mr. Austin may be right, then!" Cecilia reflected aloud.

She went to Mrs. Lespel to repeat what she had extracted from Palmet, after warning the latter not, in common loyalty, to converse about his canvass with Beauchamp.

"Did you speak of Mr. Lydiard as Captain Beauchamp's friend?" Mrs. Devereux inquired of him.

"Lydiard? why he was the man who made off with that pretty Miss Denham," said Palmet. "I

have the greatest trouble to remember them all; but it was not a day wasted. Now I know politics. Shall we ride or walk? You will let me have the happiness? I'm so unlucky; I rarely meet you."

"You will bring Captain Beauchamp to me the moment he comes?"

"I'll bring him. Bring him? Nevil Beauchamp won't want bringing."

Mrs. Devereux smiled with some pleasure.

Grancey Lespel, followed at some distance by Mr. Ferbrass, the Tory lawyer, stepped quickly up to Palmet, and asked whether Beauchamp had seen Dollikins, the brewer.

Palmet could recollect the name of one Tomlinson, and also the calling at a brewery. Moreover, Beauchamp had uttered contempt of the brewer's business, and of the social rule to accept rich brewers for gentlemen. The man's name might be Dollikins and not Tomlinson, and if so, it was Dollikins who would not see Beauchamp. To preserve his political importance, Palmet said, "Dollikins! to be sure, that was the man."

"Treats him as he does you," Mr. Lespel turned to Ferbrass. "I've sent to Dollikins to come to me this morning, if he's not driving into the town. I'll have him before Beauchamp sees him. I've asked

half-a-dozen of these country gentlemen-tradesmen to lunch at my table to-day."

"Then, sir," observed Ferbrass, "if they are men to be persuaded, they had better not see me."

"True; they're my old supporters, and mightn't like your Tory face," Mr. Lespel assented.

Mr. Ferbrass congratulated him on the heartiness of his espousal of the Tory cause.

Mr. Lespel winced a little, and told him not to put his trust in that:

"Turned Tory?" said Palmet.

Mr. Lespel declined to answer.

Palmet said to Mrs. Devereux, "He thinks I'm not worth speaking to upon politics. Now I'll give him some Beauchamp; I learned lots yesterday."

"Then let it be in Captain Beauchamp's manner," said she softly.

Palmet obeyed her commands with the liveliest exhibition of his peculiar faculty: Cecilia, rejoining them, seemed to hear Nevil himself in his emphatic political mood.—"Because the Whigs are defunct! They had no root in the people! Whig is the name of a tribe that was! You have Tory, Liberal, and Radical. There is no place for Whig. He is played out."

"Who has been putting that nonsense into your

head?" Mr. Lespel retorted. "Go shooting, go shooting!"

Shots were heard in the woods. Palmet pricked up his ears; but he was taken out riding to act cavalier to Mrs. Devereux and Miss Halkett.

Cecilia corrected his enthusiasm with the situation. "No flatteries to-day. There are hours when women feel their insignificance and helplessness. I begin to fear for Mr. Austin; and I find I can do nothing to aid him. My hands are tied. And yet I know I could win voters if only it were permissible for me to go and speak to them."

"Win them!" cried Palmet, imagining the alacrity of men's votes to be won by her. He recommended a gallop for the chasing away of melancholy, and as they were on the Bevisham high road, which was bordered by strips of turf and heath, a few good stretches brought them on the fir-heights, commanding views of the town and broad water.

"No, I cannot enjoy it," Cecilia said to Mrs. Devereux; "I don't mind the grey light; cloud and water, and half-tones of colour, are homely English and pleasant, and that opal where the sun should be has a suggestiveness richer than sunlight. I'm quite northern enough to understand it; but with me it must be either peace or

strife, and that election down there destroys my chance of peace. I never could mix reverie with excitement; the battle must be over first, and the dead buried. Can you?"

Mrs. Devereux answered: "Excitement? I am not sure that I know what it is. An election does not excite me."

"There's Nevil Beauchamp himself!" Palmet sung out; and the ladies discerned Beauchamp under a fir-tree, down by the road, not alone. A man, increasing in length like a telescope gradually reaching its end for observation, and coming to the height of a landmark, as if raised by ropes, was rising from the ground beside him. "Shall we trot on, Miss Halkett?"

Cecilia said, "No."

"Now I see a third fellow," said Palmet. "It's the other fellow, the Denham—Shrapnel—Radical meeting . . . Lydiard's his name: writes books."

"We may as well ride on," Mrs. Devereux remarked, and her horse fretted singularly.

Beauchamp perceived them, and lifted his hat. Palmet made demonstrations for the ladies. Still neither party moved nearer.

After some waiting, Cecilia proposed to turn back.

Mrs. Devereux looked into her eyes. "I'll take

the lead," she said, and started forward, pursued by Palmet. Cecilia followed at a sullen canter.

Before they came up to Beauchamp, the long-shanked man had stalked away townward. Lydiard held Beauchamp by the hand. Some last words, after the manner of instructions, passed between them, and then Lydiard also turned away.

"I say, Beauchamp, Mrs. Devereux wants to hear who that man is," Palmet said, drawing up.

"That man is Dr. Shrapnel," said Beauchamp, convinced that Cecilia had checked her horse at the sight of the doctor.

"Dr. Shrapnel," Palmet informed Mrs. Devereux.

She looked at him to seek his wits, and returning Beauchamp's admiring salutation with a little bow and smile, said, "I fancied it was a gentleman we met in Spain."

"He writes books," observed Palmet, to jog a slow intelligence.

"Pamphlets, you mean."

"I think he is not a pamphleteer," Mrs. Devereux said.

"Mr. Lydiard, then, of course; how silly I am! How can you pardon me!" Beauchamp was contrite; he could not explain that a long guess he had made at Miss Halkett's reluctance to come

up to him when Dr. Shrapnel was with him had preoccupied his mind. He sent off Palmet the bearer of a pretext for bringing Lydiard back, and then said to Cecilia, "You recognised Dr. Shrapnel?"

"I thought it might be Dr. Shrapnel," she was candid enough to reply. "I could not well recognise him, not knowing him."

"Here comes Mr. Lydiard; and let me assure you, if I may take the liberty of introducing him, he is no true Radical. He is a philosopher—one of the flirts, the butterflies of politics, as Dr. Shrapnel calls them."

Beauchamp hummed over some improvised trifles to Lydiard, then introduced him cursorily, and all walked in the direction of Itchincope. It was really the Mr. Lydiard Mrs. Devereux had met in Spain, so they were left in the rear to discuss their travels. Much conversation did not go on in front. Cecilia was very reserved. By-and-by she said, "I am glad you have come into the country early to-day."

He spoke rapturously of the fresh air, and not too mildly of his pleasure in meeting her. Quite off her guard, she began to hope he was getting to be one of them again, until she heard him tell Lord

Palmet that he had come early out of Bevisham for the walk with Dr. Shrapnel, and to call on certain rich tradesmen living near Itchincope. He mentioned the name of Dollikins.

"Dollikins?" Palmet consulted a perturbed recollection. Among the entangled list of new names he had gathered recently from the study of politics, Dollikins rang in his head. He shouted, "Yes, Dollikins! to be sure. Lespel has him to lunch to-day;—calls him a gentleman-tradesman; odd fish! and told a fellow called—where is it now?—a name like brass or copper . . . Copperstone? Brasspot? . . . told him he'd do well to keep his Tory cheek out of sight. It's the names of those fellows bother one so! All the rest's easy."

"You are evidently in a state of confusion, Lord Palmet," said Cecilia.

The tone of rebuke and admonishment was unperceived. "Not about the facts," he rejoined. "I'm for fair play all round; no trickery. I tell Beauchamp all I know, just as I told you this morning, Miss Halkett. What I don't like is Lespel turning Tory."

Cecilia put a stop to his indiscretions by halting for Mrs. Devereux, and saying to Beauchamp, "If

your friend would return to Bevisham by rail, this is the nearest point to the station."

Palmet, best-natured of men, though generally prompted by some of his peculiar motives, dismounted from his horse, leaving him to Beauchamp, that he might conduct Mr. Lydiard to the station, and perhaps hear a word of Miss Denham: at any rate be able to form a guess as to the secret of that art of his, which had in the space of an hour restored a happy and luminous vivacity to the languid Mrs. Wardour-Devereux.

CHAPTER II.

THE QUESTION AS TO THE EXAMINATION OF THE
WHIGS, AND THE FINE BLOW STRUCK BY MR.
EVERARD ROMFREY.

ITCHINCOPE was famous for its hospitality. Yet Beauchamp, when in the presence of his hostess, could see that he was both unexpected and unwelcome. Mrs. Lespel was unable to conceal it; she looked meaningly at Cecilia, talked of the house being very full, and her husband engaged till late in the afternoon. And Captain Baskellett had arrived on a sudden, she said. And the luncheon-table in the dining-room could not possibly hold more.

“We three will sit in the library, anywhere,” said Cecilia.

So they sat and lunched in the library, where Mrs. Devereux served unconsciously for an excellent ally to Cecilia in chatting to Beauchamp, principally of the writings of Mr. Lydiard.

Had the blinds of the windows been drawn down and candles lighted, Beauchamp would have been well contented to remain with these two ladies, and forget the outer world ; sweeter society could not have been offered him : but glancing carelessly on to the lawn, he exclaimed in some wonderment that the man he particularly wished to see was there. " It must be Dollikins, the brewer. I've had him pointed out to me in Bevissham, and I never can light on him at his brewery."

No excuse for detaining the impetuous candidate struck Cecilia. She betook herself to Mrs. Lespel, to give and receive counsel in the emergency, while Beauchamp struck across the lawn to Mr. Dollikins, who had the squire of Itchincope on the other side of him.

Late in the afternoon a report reached the ladies of a furious contest going on over Dollikins. Mr. Algy Borolick was the first to give them intelligence of it, and he declared that Beauchamp had wrested Dollikins from Grancey Lespel. This was contradicted subsequently by Mr. Stukely Culbrett. " But there's heavy pulling between them," he said.

" It will do all the good in the world to Grancey," said Mrs. Lespel.

She sat in her little blue-room, with gentlemen congregating at the open window.

Presently Grancey Lespel rounded a projection of the house where the drawing-room stood out: "The maddest folly ever talked!" he delivered himself in wrath. "The Whigs dead? You may as well say I'm dead."

It was Beauchamp answering: "Politically, you're dead, if you call yourself a Whig. You couldn't be a live one, for the party's in pieces, blown to the winds. The country was once a chess-board for Whig and Tory: but that game's at an end. There's no doubt on earth that the Whigs are dead."

"But if there's no doubt about it, how is it I have a doubt about it?"

"You know you're a Tory. You tried to get that man Dollikins from me in the Tory interest."

"I mean to keep him out of Radical clutches. Now that's the truth."

They came up to the group by the open window, still conversing hotly, indifferent to listeners.

"You won't keep him from me; I have him," said Beauchamp.

"You delude yourself; I have his promise, his pledged word," said Grancey Lespel.

"The man himself told you his opinion of renegade Whigs."

"Renegade!"

"Renegade Whig is an actionable phrase," Mr. Culbrett observed.

He was unnoticed.

"If you don't like 'renegade,' take 'dead,'" said Beauchamp. "Dead Whig resurgent in the Tory. You are dead."

"It's the stupid conceit if your party thinks that."

"*Dead*, my dear Mr. Lespel. I'll say for the Whigs, they would not be seen touting for Tories if they were not ghosts of Whigs. You are dead. There is no doubt of it."

"But," Grancey Lespel repeated, "if there's no doubt about it, how is it I have a doubt about it?"

"The Whigs preached finality in Reform. It was their own funeral sermon."

"Nonsensical talk!"

"I don't dispute your liberty of action to go over to the Tories, but you have no right to attempt to take an honest Liberal with you. And that I've stopped."

"Aha! Beauchamp; the man's mine. Come,

you'll own he swore he wouldn't vote for a Shrapnelite."

"Don't you remember?—that's how the Tories used to fight *you*; they stuck an epithet to you, and hooted to set the mob an example; you hit them off to the life," said Beauchamp, brightening with the fine ire of strife, and affecting a sadder indignation. "You traded on the ignorance of a man prejudiced by lying reports of one of the noblest of human creatures."

"Shrapnel? There! I've had enough." Grancey Lespel bounced away, with both hands outspread on the level of his ears.

"Dead!" Beauchamp sent the ghastly accusation after him.

Grancey faced round and said, "Bo!" which was applauded for a smart retort. And let none of us be so exalted above the wit of daily life as to sneer at it. Mrs. Lespel remarked to Mr. Culbrett, "Do you not see how much he is refreshed by the interest he takes in this election? He is ten years younger."

Beauchamp bent towards her, saying mock-dolefully, "I'm sorry to tell you that if ever he was a sincere Whig, he has years of remorse before him."

Promise me, Captain Beauchamp," she answered, "promise you will give us no more politics to-day."

"If none provoke me."

"None shall."

"And as to Bevisham," said Mr. Culbrett, "it's the identical borough for a Radical candidate, for every voter there demands a division of his property, and he should be the last to complain of an adoption of his principles."

"Clever," rejoined Beauchamp; "but I am under government;" and he swept a bow to Mrs. Lespel.

As they were breaking up the group, Captain Baskellett appeared.

"Ah! Nevil," said he, passed him, saluted Miss Halkett through the window, then cordially squeezed his cousin's hand. "Having a holiday out of Bevisham? The baron expects to meet you at Mount Laurels to-morrow. He particularly wishes me to ask you whether you think all is fair in war?"

"I don't," said Nevil.

"Not? The canvass goes on swimmingly?"

"Ask Palmet."

"Palmet gives you two-thirds of the borough.

The poor old Tory tortoise is nowhere. They've been writing about you, Nevil."

"They have. And if there's a man of honour in the party I shall hold him responsible for it."

"I allude to an article in the Bevisham Liberal paper; a magnificent eulogy, upon my honour. I give you my word, I have rarely read an article so eloquent. And what is the Conservative misdemeanour which the one man of honour in the party is to pay for?"

"I'll talk to you about it by-and-by," said Nevil.

He seemed to Cecilia too trusting, too simple, considering his cousin's undisguised tone of banter. Yet she could not put him on his guard. She would have had Mr. Culbrett do so. She walked on the terrace with him near upon sunset, and said, "The position Captain Beauchamp is in here is most unfair to him."

"There's nothing unfair in the lion's den," said Stukely Culbrett; adding, "Now, observe, Miss Halkett; he talks for effect. He discovers that Lespel is a Torified Whig; but that does not make him a bit more alert. It's to say smart things. He speaks, but won't act, as if he were among enemies. He's getting too fond of his bow-wow. Here he is, and he knows the den, and he

chooses to act the innocent. You see how ridiculous? That trick of the ingénu, or peculiarly heavenly messenger, who pretends that he ought never to have any harm done to him, though he carries the lighted match, is the way of young Radicals. Otherwise Beauchamp would be a dear boy. We shall see how he takes his thrashing."

"You feel sure he will be beaten?"

"He has too strong a dose of fool's honesty to succeed—stands for the game laws with Radicals, for example. He's loaded with scruples and crotchets, and thinks more of them than of his winds and his tides. No public man is to be made out of that. His idea of the Whigs being dead shows a head that can't read the country. He means himself for mankind, and is preparing to be the benefactor of a country parish."

"But as a naval officer?"

"Excellent."

Cecilia was convinced that Mr. Culbrett underestimated Beauchamp. Nevertheless the confidence expressed in Beauchamp's defeat reassured and pleased her. At midnight she was dancing with him in the midst of great matronly country vessels that raised a wind when they launched on the waltz, and exacted an anxious pilotage on the part of gen-

tlemen careful of their partners; and why, I cannot say, but contrasts produce quaint ideas in excited spirits, and a dancing politician appeared to her so absurd that at one moment she had to bite her lips not to laugh. It will hardly be credited that the waltz with Nevil was delightful to Cecilia all the while, and dancing with others a penance. He danced with none other. He led her to a three o'clock morning supper; one of those triumphant subversions of the laws and customs of earth which have the charm of a form of present deification for all young people; and she, while noting how the poor man's advocate dealt with costly pasties and sparkling wines, was overjoyed at his hearty comrade's manner towards the gentlemen, and a leadership in fun that he seemed to have established. Cecil Baskett acknowledged it, and complimented him on it. "I give you my word, Nevil, I never heard you in finer trim. Here's to our drive into Bevisham to-morrow! Do you drink it? I beg; I entreat."

"Oh, certainly," said Nevil.

"Will you take a whip down there?"

"If you're all insured."

"On my honour, old Nevil, driving a four-in-hand is easier than governing the country."

“I’ll accept your authority for what you know best,” said Nevil.

The toast of the Drive into Bevisham was drunk.

Cecilia left the supper-table, mortified, and feeling disgraced by her participation in a secret that was being wantonly abused to humiliate Nevil, as she was made to think by her sensitiveness. All the gentlemen were against him, excepting perhaps that chattering pie, Lord Palmet, who did him more mischief than his enemies. She could not sleep. She walked out on the terrace with Mrs. Wardour-Devereux, in a dream, hearing that lady breathe remarks hardly less than sentimental, and an unwearied succession of shouts from the smoking-room.

“They are not going to bed to-night,” said Mrs. Devereux.

“They are mystifying Captain Beauchamp,” said Cecilia.

“My husband tells me they are going to drive him into the town to-morrow.”

Cecilia flushed: she could scarcely get her breath.

“Is that their plot?” she murmured.

Sleep was rejected by her, bed itself. The drive into Bevisham had been fixed for nine A.M. She wrote two lines on note-paper in her room:

but found them over-fervid and mysterious. Besides, how were they to be conveyed to Nevil's chamber!

She walked in the passage for half an hour, thinking it possible she might meet him; not the most lady-like of proceedings, but her head was bewildered. An arm-chair in her room invited her to rest and think—the mask of a natural desire for sleep. At eight in the morning she was awakened by her maid, and at a touch exclaimed, “Have they gone?” and her heart still beat after hearing that most of the gentlemen were in and about the stables. Cecilia was down-stairs at a quarter to nine. The breakfast-room was empty of all but Lord Palmet and Mr. Wardour-Devereux; one selecting a cigar to light out of doors, the other debating between two pipes. She beckoned to Palmet, and commissioned him to inform Beauchamp that she wished him to drive her down to Bevisham in her pony carriage. Palmet brought back word from Beauchamp that he had an appointment at ten o'clock in the town. “I want to see him,” she said; so Palmet ran out with the order. Cecilia met Beauchamp in the entrance-hall.

“You must not go,” she said bluntly.

"I can't break an appointment," said he—"for the sake of my own pleasure," was implied.

"Will you not listen to me, Nevil, when I say you cannot go?"

A coachman's trumpet blew.

"I shall be late. That's Colonel Millington's team. He starts first, then Wardour-Devereux, then Cecil, and I mount beside him; Palmet's at our heels."

"But can't you even imagine a purpose for their driving into Bevisham so pompously?"

"Well, men with drags haven't commonly much purpose," he said.

"But on this occasion! At an election time! Surely, Nevil, you can guess at a reason."

A second trumpet blew very martially. Footmen came in search of Captain Beauchamp. The alternative of breaking her pledged word to her father, or of letting Nevil be burlesqued in the sight of the town, could no longer be dallied with.

Cecilia said, "Well, Nevil, then you shall hear it."

Hereupon Captain Baskett's groom informed Captain Beauchamp that he was off.

"Yes," Nevil said to Cecilia, "tell me on board the yacht."

"Nevil, you will be driving into the town with the second Tory candidate of the borough."

"Which? who?" Nevil asked.

"Your cousin Cecil."

"Tell Captain Baskett that I don't drive down till an hour later," Nevil said to the groom. "Cecilia, you're my friend; I wish you were more. I wish we didn't differ. I shall hope to change you—make you come half-way out of that citadel of yours. This is my uncle Everard! I might have made sure there'd be a blow from him! And Cecil! of all men for a politician! Cecilia, think of it! Cecil Baskett! I beg Seymour Austin's pardon for having suspected him"

Now sounded Captain Baskett's trumpet.

Angry though he was, Beauchamp laughed. "Isn't it exactly like the baron to spring a mine of this kind?"

There was decidedly humour in the plot, and it was a lusty quarterstaff blow into the bargain. Beauchamp's head rang with it. He could not conceal the stunning effect it had on him. Gratitude and tenderness towards Cecilia for saving him, at the cost of a partial breach of faith that he quite understood, from the scandal of the public entry

into Bevisham on the Tory coach-box, alternated with his interjections regarding his uncle Everard.

At eleven, Cecilia sat in her pony-carriage, giving final directions to Mrs. Devereux where to look out for the *Esperanza* and the schooner's boat. "Then I drive down alone," Mrs. Devereux said.

The gentlemen were all off, and every available maid with them on the coach-boxes, a brilliant sight that had been missed by Nevil and Cecilia.

"Why, here's Lydiard!" said Nevil, supposing that Lydiard must be approaching him with tidings of the second Tory candidate. But Lydiard knew nothing of it. He was the bearer of a letter on foreign paper—marked urgent, in Rosamund's hand—and similarly worded in the well-known hand which had inscribed the original address of the letter to Steynham.

Beauchamp opened it and read—

"Château Tourdestelle

"(Eure).

"Come. I give you three days—no more.

"RENÉE."

The brevity was horrible. Did it spring from childish imperiousness or tragic peril?

Beauchamp could imagine it to be this or that.

In moments of excited speculation we do not dwell on the possibility that there may be a mixture of motives.

"I fear I must cross over to France this evening," he said to Cecilia.

She replied, "It is likely to be stormy to-night. The steamboat may not run."

"If there's a doubt of it, I shall find a French lugger. You are tired, from not sleeping last night."

"No," she answered, and nodded to Mrs. Devereux, beside whom Mr. Lydiard stood: "You will not drive down alone, you see."

For a young lady threatened with a tempest in her heart, as disturbing to her as the one gathering in the west for ships at sea, Miss Halkett bore herself well.

CHAPTER III.

THE DRIVE INTO BEVISHAM.

BEAUCHAMP was requested by Cecilia to hold the reins. His fair companion in the pony-carriage preferred to lean back musing, and he had leisure to think over the blow dealt him by his uncle Everard with so sure an aim so ringingly on the head. And in the first place he made no attempt to disdain it because it was nothing but artful and heavy-handed, after the mediæval pattern. Of old he himself had delighted in artfulness as well as boldness and the unmistakable hit. Highly to prize generalship was in his blood, though latterly the very forces propelling him to his political warfare had forbidden the use of it to him. He saw the patient veteran laying his gun for a long shot—to give as good as he had received; and in realising Everard Romfrey's perfectly placid bearing under provocation, such as he certainly would have

maintained while preparing his reply to it, the raw fighting humour of the plot touched the sense of justice in Beauchamp enough to make him own that he had been the first to offend. He could reflect also on the likelihood that other offended men of his uncle's age and position would have sulked or stormed, threatening the Parthian shot of the vindictive testator. If there was godlessness in turning to politics for a weapon to strike a domestic blow, manfulness in some degree signalled it. Beauchamp could fancy his uncle crying out, Who set the example? and he was not at that instant inclined to dwell on the occult virtues of the example he had set. To be honest, this elevation of a political puppet like Cecil Baskellett, and the starting him, out of the same family which Turbot, the journalist, had magnified, into Bevisham with such pomp and flourish in opposition to the serious young champion of popular rights and the Puritan style, was ludicrously effective. Conscienceless of course. But that was the way of the Old School.

Beauchamp broke the silence by thanking Cecilia once more for saving him from the absurd exhibition of the Radical candidate on the Tory coach-box, and laughing at the grimmish slyness of his

uncle Everard's conspiracy : a something in it that was half-smile half-sneer ; not exactly malignant, and by no means innocent ; something made up of the simplicity of a lighted match, and its proximity to powder, yet neither deadly, in spite of a wicked twinkle, nor at all pretending to be harmless : in short, a specimen of old English practical humour.

He laboured to express these or corresponding views of it, with tolerably natural laughter, and Cecilia rallied her spirits at his pleasant manner of taking his blow.

"I shall compliment the baron when I meet him to-night," he said. "What can we compare him to?"

She suggested the Commander of the Faithful, the Lord Haroun, who likewise had a turn for buffooneries to serve a purpose, and could direct them loftily and sovereignly.

"No : Everard Romfrey's a northerner from the feet up," said Beauchamp.

Cecilia compliantly offered him a sketch of the Scandinavian Troll : much nearer the mark, he thought, and exclaimed : "Baron Troll ! I'm afraid, Cecilia, you have robbed him of the best part of his fun. And you will owe it entirely to him if you

should be represented in Parliament by my cousin Baskelett."

"Promise me, Nevil, that you will, when you meet Captain Baskelett, not forget I did you some service, and that I wish, I shall be so glad if you do not resent certain things. . . . Very objectionable, we all think."

He released her from the embarrassing petition: "Oh! now I know my man, you may be sure I won't waste a word on him. The fact is, he would not understand a word, and would require more—and that I don't do. When I fancied Mr. Austin was the responsible person, I meant to speak to him.

Cecilia smiled gratefully.

The sweetness of a love-speech would not have been sweeter to her than this proof of civilised chivalry in Nevil.

They came to the fir-heights overlooking Bevis-ham. Here the breezy beginning of a southwestern autumnal gale tossed the ponies' manes and made threads of Cecilia's shorter locks of beautiful auburn by the temples and the neck, blustering the curls that streamed in a thick involution from the silken band gathering them off her uncovered clear-swept ears.

Beauchamp took an impression of her side face. It seemed to offer him everything the world could offer of cultivated purity, intelligent beauty and attractiveness; and 'Wilt thou?' said the winged minute. Peace, a good repute in the mouths of men, home, and a trustworthy woman for mate, an ideal English lady, the rarest growth of our country; and friends and fair esteem were offered. Last night he had waltzed with her, and the manner of this tall graceful girl in submitting to the union of the measure and reserving her individual distinction, had exquisitely flattered his taste, giving him an auspicious image of her in partnership, through the uses of life.

He looked ahead at the low dead-blue cloud swinging from across channel. What could be the riddle of Renée's letter! It chained him completely.

"At all events, I shall not be away longer than three days," he said; paused, eyed Cecilia's profile, and added, "Do we differ so much?"

"It may not be so much as we think," said she.

"But if we do!"

"Then, Nevil, there is a difference between us."

"But if we keep our lips closed?"

"We should have to shut our eyes as well!"

A lovely melting image of her stole over him ; all the warmer for her unwittingness in producing it ; and it awakened a tenderness towards the simple speaker.

Cecilia's delicate breeding saved her from running on figuratively. She continued : "Intellectual differences do not cause wounds, except when very unintellectual sentiments are behind them :—my conceit, or your impatience, Nevil ? 'Noi veggiam come quei, che ha mala luce.' I can confess my sight to be imperfect : but will you ever do so ? "

Her musical voice in Italian charmed his hearing.

"What poet was that you quoted ? "

"The wisest : Dante."

"Dr. Shrapnel's favourite ! I must try to read him."

"He reads Dante ? " Cecilia threw a stress on the august name ; and it was manifest that she cared not for the answer.

Contemptuous exclusiveness could not go farther.

"He is a man of cultivation," Beauchamp said cursorily, trying to avoid dissension, but in vain. "I wish I were half as well instructed, and the world half as charitable as he !—You ask me if I shall admit my sight to be imperfect. Yes ; when

you prove to me that priests and landlords are willing to do their duty by the people in preference to their churches and their property: but will you ever shake off prejudice?"

Here was opposition sounding again. Cecilia mentally reproached Dr. Shrapnel for it.

"Indeed, Nevil, really, must not—may I not ask you this?—must not everyone feel the evil spell of some associations? And Dante and Dr. Shrapnel!"

"You don't know him, Cecilia."

"I saw him yesterday."

"You thought him too tall?"

"I thought of his character."

"How angry I should be with you if you were not so beautiful!"

"I am immensely indebted to my unconscious advocate."

"You are clad in steel; you flash back; you won't answer me out of the heart. I'm convinced it is pure wilfulness that makes you oppose me."

"I fancy you must be convinced because you cannot imagine women to have any share of public spirit, Nevil."

A grain of truth in that remark set Nevil reflecting.

"I want them to have it," he remarked, and glanced at a Tory placard, probably the puppet's fresh-printed address to the electors, on one of the wayside fir-trees. "Bevisham looks well from here. We might make a north-western Venice of it, if we liked."

"Papa told you it would be money sunk in mud."

"Did I mention it to him?—Thoroughly Conservative!—So he would leave the mud as it is. They insist on our not venturing anything—those Tories! exactly as though we had gained the best of human conditions, instead of counting crops of rogues, malefactors, egoists, noxious and lumbering creatures that deaden the country. Your town down there is one of the ugliest and dirtiest in the kingdom: it might be the fairest."

"I have often thought that of Bevisham, Nevil."

He drew a visionary sketch of quays, embankments, bridged islands, public buildings, magical emanations of patriotic architecture, with a practical air, an absence of that enthusiasm which struck her with suspicion when it was not applied to landscape or the Arts; and she accepted it, and warmed, and even allowed herself to appear hesitating when he returned to the similarity of the

state of mud-begirt Bevisham and our great sluggish England.

Was he not perhaps to be pitied in his bondage to the Frenchwoman, who could have no ideas in common with him ?

The rare circumstance that she and Nevil Beauchamp had found a subject of agreement, partially overcame the sentiment Cecilia entertained towards the foreign lady; and having now one idea in common with him, she conceived the possibility that there might be more. There must be many, for he loved England, and she no less. She clung, however, to the topic of Bevisham, preferring to dream of the many more, rather than run risks. Undoubtedly the town was of an ignoble aspect; and it was declining in prosperity; and it was consequently over-populated. And undoubtedly (so she was induced to coincide for the moment) a Government, acting to any extent like a supervising head, should aid and direct the energies of towns and ports and trades, and not leave everything everywhere to chance: schools for the people, public morality, should be the charge of Government. Cecilia had surrendered the lead to him, and was forced to subscribe to an equivalent of 'undoubtedly' the Tories just as little as the

Liberals had done these good offices. Party against party, neither of them had a forethoughtful head for the land at large. They waited for the Press to spur a great imperial country to be but defensively armed, and they accepted the so-called volunteers, with a nominal one-month's drill per annum, as a guarantee of defence !

Beauchamp startled her, actually kindled her mind to an activity of wonder and regret, with the statement of how much Government, acting with some degree of farsightedness, *might* have won to pay the public debt and remit taxation, by originally retaining the lines of railway, and fastening on the valuable land adjoining stations. Hundreds of millions of pounds !

She dropped a sigh at the prodigious amount, but inquired, "Who has calculated it ?"

For though perfectly aware that this kind of conversation was a special compliment paid to her by her friend Nevil, and dimly perceiving that it implied something beyond a compliment—in fact, that it was his manner of probing her for sympathy, as other men would have conducted the process preliminary to deadly flattery or to wooing, her wits fenced her heart about ; the exercise of shrewdness was an instinct of self-preservation. She had

nothing but her poor wits, daily growing fainter, to resist him with. And he seemed to know it, and therefore assailed them, never trying at the heart.

That vast army of figures might be but a phantom army conjured out of the Radical mists, might it not? she hinted. And besides, we cannot surely require a Government to speculate in the future, can we?

Possibly not, as Governments go, Beauchamp said.

But what think you of a Government of land-owners decreeing the enclosure of millions of acres of common land amongst themselves; taking the property of the people to add to their own! Say, is not that plunder? Public property, observe; decreed to them by their own law-making, under the pretence that it was being reclaimed for cultivation, when in reality it has been but an addition to their pleasure-grounds: a flat robbery of pasture from the poor man's cow and goose, and his right of cutting furze for firing. Consider that! Beauchamp's eyes flashed democratic in reciting this injury to the objects of his warm solicitude—the man, the cow, and the goose. But so must he have looked when fronting England's enemies, and his aspect of fervour

subdued Cecilia. She confessed her inability to form an estimate of such conduct.

"Are they doing it still?" she asked.

"We owe it to Dr. Shrapnel foremost that there is now a watch over them to stop them. But for him, Grancey Lespel would have enclosed half of Northeden Head. As it is, he has filched bits here and there, and he will have to put back his palings."

However, now let Cecilia understand that we English, calling ourselves free, are under morally lawless rule. *Government* is what we require, and our means of getting it must be through universal suffrage. At present we have no Government; only shifting Party Ministries, which are the tools of divers interests, wealthy factions, to the sacrifice of the Commonwealth.

She listened, like Rosamund Culling overborne by Dr. Shrapnel, inwardly praying that she might discover a man to reply to him.

"A Despotism, Nevil?"

He hoped not, declined the despot, was English enough to stand against the best of men in that character; but he cast it on Tory, Whig, and Liberal, otherwise the Constitutionalists, if we were to come upon the despot.

“They see we are close on universal suffrage ; they’ve been bidding each in turn for ‘the people,’ and that has brought them to it, and now they’re alarmed and accuse one another of treason to the Constitution, and they don’t accept the situation : and there’s a fear that, to carry on their present system, they will be thwarting the people or corrupting them : and in that case we shall have our despot in some shape or other, and we shall suffer.”

“Nevil,” said Cecilia, “I am out of my depth.”

“I’ll support you ; I can swim for two,” said he.

“You are very self-confident, but I find I am not fit for battle ; at least not in the front ranks.”

“Nerve me, then : will you ? Try to comprehend once for all what the battle is ? ”

“I am afraid I am too indifferent ; I am too luxurious. That reminds me : you want to meet your uncle Everard : and if you will sleep at Mount Laurels to-night, the *Esperanza* shall take you to France to-morrow morning, and can wait to bring you back.”

As she spoke she perceived a flush mounting over Nevil’s face. Soon it was communicated to hers.

The strange secret of the blood electrified them both, and revealed the burning undercurrent

running between them from the hearts of each. The light that showed how near they were to one another was kindled at the barrier dividing them. It remained as good as a secret, unchallenged until they had separated, and after midnight Cecilia looked through her chamber windows at the driving moon of a hurricane scud, and read clearly his honourable reluctance to be wafted over to his French love by her assistance; and Beauchamp on board the tossing steamboat perceived in her sympathetic reddening that she had divined him.

This auroral light eclipsed the other events of the day. He drove into a town royally decorated, and still humming with the ravishment of the Tory entrance. He sailed in the schooner to Mount Laurels, in the society of Captain Baskelett and his friends, who, finding him tamer than they expected, bantered him in the cheerfullest fashion. He waited for his uncle Everard several hours at Mount Laurels, perused the junior Tory's address to the Electors, throughout which there was not an idea — safest of addresses to canvass upon! perused likewise, at Captain Baskelett's request, a broadsheet of an article introducing the new candidate to Bevisham with the battle-axe

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Romfreys to back him, in high burlesque of Timothy Turbot upon Beauchamp: and Cecil hoped his cousin would not object to his borrowing a Romfrey or two for so pressing an occasion. All very funny, and no doubt the presence of Mr. Everard Romfrey would have heightened the fun from the fountain-head; but he happened to be delayed, and Beauchamp had to leave directions behind him in the town, besides the discussion of a whole plan of conduct with Dr. Shrapnel, so he was under the necessity of departing without seeing his uncle, really to his regret. He left word to that effect.

Taking leave of Cecilia, he talked of his return 'home' within three or four days as a certainty.

She said: "Canvassing should not be neglected now."

Her hostility was confused by what she had done to save him from annoyance, while his behaviour towards his cousin Cecil increased her respect for him. She detected a pathetic meaning in his mention of the word home; she mused on his having called her beautiful: whither was she hurrying? Forgetful of her horror of his revolutionary ideas, forgetful of the elevation of her own, she thrilled secretly on hearing it stated

by the jubilant young Tories at Mount Laurels, as a characteristic of Beauchamp, that he was clever in parrying political thrusts, and slipping from the theme; he who with her gave out unguardedly the thoughts deepest in him. And the thoughts!—were they not of generous origin? Where so true a helpmate for him as the one to whom his mind appealed? It could not be so with the Frenchwoman. Cecilia divined a generous nature by generosity, and set herself to believe that in honour he had not yet dared to speak to her from the heart, not being at heart quite free. She was at the same time in her remains of pride, cool enough to examine and rebuke the weakness she succumbed to in now clinging to him by that which yesterday she hardly less than loathed, still deeply disliked.

CHAPTER IV.

TOURDESTELLE.

ON the part of Beauchamp, his conversation with Cecilia during the drive into Bevisham opened out for the first time in his life a prospect of home ; he had felt the word in speaking it, and it signified an end to the distractions produced by the sex, allegiance to one beloved respected woman, and also a basis of operations against the world. For she was evidently conquerable, and once matched with him would be the very woman to nerve and sustain him. Did ehe not listen to him? He liked her resistance. That element of the barbarous which went largely to form his emotional nature was overjoyed in wresting such a woman from the enemy, and subduing her personally. She was a prize. She was a splendid prize, cut out from under the guns of the fort. He rendered all that was due to his eminently good cause for its part in so signal a success,

but individual satisfaction is not diminished by the thought that the individual's discernment selected the cause thus beneficent to him.

Beauchamp's meditations were diverted by the sight of the coast of France dashed in rain-lines across a weed-strewn sea. The 'three days' granted him by Renée were over, and it scarcely troubled him that he should be behind the time; he detested mystery, holding it to be a sign of pretentious feebleness, often of imposture, it might be frivolity. Punctilious obedience to the mysterious brevity of the summons, and not to chafe at it, appeared to him as much as could be expected of a struggling man. This was the state of the case with him, until he stood on French earth, breathed French air, and chanced to hear the tongue of France twittered by a lady on the quay. The charm was instantaneous. He reminded himself that Renée, unlike her countrywomen, had no gift for writing letters. They had never corresponded since the hour of her marriage. They had met in Sicily, at Syracuse, in the presence of her father and her husband, and so inanimate was she that the meeting seemed like the conclusion of their history. Her brother Roland sent tidings of her by fits, and sometimes a conventional message

from Tourdestelle. Latterly her husband's name had been cited as among the wildfires of Parisian quags, in journals more or less devoted to those unreclaimed spaces of the city. Well, if she was unhappy, was it not the fulfilment of his prophecy in Venice?

Renée's brevity became luminous. She needed him urgently, and knowing him faithful to the death, she, because she knew him, dispatched purely the words which said she needed him. Why, those brief words were the poetry of noble confidence! But what could her distress be? The lover was able to read that, 'Come; I give you three days,' addressed to him, was not language of a woman free of her yoke.

Excited to guess and guess, Beauchamp swept on to speculations of a madness that seized him bodily at last. Were you loved, Cecilia? He thought little of politics in relation to Renée; or of home, or of honour in the world's eye, or of labouring to pay the fee for his share of life. This at least was one of the forms of love which precipitate men: the sole thought in him was to be with her. She was Renée, the girl of whom he had prophetically said that she must come to regrets and tears. His vision of her was not

at Tourdestelle, though he assumed her to be there awaiting him: she was under the sea-shadowing Alps, looking up to the red and gold-rosed heights of a realm of morning that was hers inviolably, and under which Renée was eternally his.

The interval between then and now was but the space of an unquiet sea traversed in the night, sad in the passage of it, but featureless—and it had proved him right! It was to Nevil Beauchamp as if the spirit of his old passion woke up again to glorious hopeful morning when he stood in Renée's France.

Tourdestelle enjoyed the aristocratic privilege of being twelve miles from the nearest railway station. Alighting here on an evening of clear sky, Beauchamp found an English groom ready to dismount for him and bring on his portmanteau. The man said that his mistress had been twice to the station, and was now at the neighbouring Château Dianet, Thither Beauchamp betook himself on horseback. He was informed at the gates that Madame la marquise had left for Tourdestelle in the saddle only ten minutes previously. The lodge-keeper had been instructed to invite him to stay at Château Dianet in the event of his arriving late, but it would be possible to over-

take madame by a cut across the heights at a turn of the valley. Beauchamp pushed along the valley for this visible projection; a towering mass of woodland, in the midst of which a narrow roadway, worn like the track of a torrent with heavy rain, wound upward. On his descent to the farther side, he was to spy directly below in the flat for Tourdestelle. He crossed the wooded neck above the valley, and began descending, peering into gulfs of the twilight dusk. Some paces down he was aided by a brilliant half-moon that divided the whole underlying country into sharp outlines of dark and fair, and while endeavouring to distinguish the château of Tourdestelle his eyes were attracted to an angle of the downward zig-zag, where a pair of horses emerged into broad light swiftly; apparently the riders were disputing, or one had overtaken the other in pursuit. Riding habit and plumed hat signalled the sex of one. Beauchamp sung out a gondolier's cry. He fancied it was answered. He was heard, for the lady turned about, and as he rode down, still uncertain of her, she came cantering up alone, and there could be no uncertainty.

Moonlight is friendless to eyes that would make sure of a face long unseen. It was Renée whose

hand he clasped, but the story of the years on her, and whether she was in bloom, or wan as the beams revealing her, he could not see.

Her tongue sounded to him as if it were loosened without a voice. "You have come. That storm! You are safe!"

So phantom-like a sound of speech alarmed him. "I lost no time. But you?"

"I am well."

"Nothing hangs over you?"

"Nothing."

"Why give me just three days?"

"Pure impatience. Have you forgotten me?"

Their horses walked on with them. They unlocked their hands.

"You knew it was I?" said he.

"Who else could it be? I heard Venice," she replied.

Her previous cavalier was on his feet, all but on his knees, it appeared, searching for something that eluded him under the road-side bank. He sprang at it and waved it, leapt in the saddle, and remarked, as he drew up beside Renée: "What one picks from the earth one may wear, I presume, especially when we can protest it is our property."

Beauchamp saw him planting a white substance most carefully at the breast buttonhole of his coat. It could hardly be a flower. Some drooping exotic of the conservatory perhaps resembled it.

Renée pronounced his name: "M. le comte Henri d'Henriel."

He bowed to Beauchamp with an extreme sweep of the hat.

"Last night, M. Beauchamp, we put up vows for you to the marine god, beseeching an exemption from that horrible *mal de mer*. Thanks to the storm, I suppose, I have won. I must maintain, madame, that I won."

"You wear your trophy," said Renée, and her horse reared and darted ahead.

The gentlemen on each side of her struck into a trot. Beauchamp glanced at M. d'Henriel's breast-decoration. Renée pressed the pace, and threading dense covers of foliage they reached the level of the valley, where for a couple of miles she led them, stretching away merrily, now in shadow, now in moonlight, between high land and meadow land, and a line of poplars in the meadows winding with the river that fed the vale and shot forth gleams of silvery disquiet by rustic bridge and mill.

The strangeness of being beside her, not having yet scanned her face, marvelling at her voice—that was like and unlike the Renée of old, full of her, but in another key, a mellow note, maturer—made the ride magical to Beauchamp, planting the past in the present like a perceptible ghost.

Renée slackened speed, saying: “Tourdestelle spans a branch of our little river. This is our gate. Had it been daylight I would have taken you by another way, and you would have seen the black tower burnt in the Revolution; an imposing monument, I am assured. However, you will think it pretty beside the stream. Do you come with us, M. le comte?”

His answer was inaudible to Beauchamp; he did not quit them.

The lamp at the lodge-gates presented the young man's face in full view, and Beauchamp thought him supremely handsome. He perceived it to be a lady's glove that M. d'Henriel wore at his breast.

Renée walked her horse up the park-drive, alongside the bright running water. It seemed that she was aware of the method of provoking or reproving M. d'Henriel. He endured some minutes of total speechlessness at this pace, and abruptly said adieu and turned back.

Renée bounded like a vessel free of her load. "But why should we hurry?" said she, and checked her course to the walk again. "I hope you will like our Normandy, and my valley. You used to love France, Nevil; and Normandy, they tell me, is cousin to the opposite coast of England, in climate, soil, people, it may be in manners too. A Beauchamp never can feel that he is a foreigner in Normandy. We claim you half French. You have grander parks, they say. We can give you sunlight."

"And it was really only the wish to see me?" said Beauchamp.

"Only, and really. One does not live for ever—on earth; and it becomes a question whether friends should be shadows to one another before death. I wrote to you because I wished to see you: I was impatient because I am Renée."

"You relieve me!"

"Evidently you have forgotten my character, Nevil."

"Not a feature of it."

"Ah!" she breathed involuntarily.

"Would you have me forget it?"

"When I think by myself, quite alone, yes, I would. Otherwise how can one hope that one's

friend is friendship, supposing him to read us as we are—minutely, accurately? And it is in absence that we desire our friends to be friendship itself. And . . . and I am utterly astray! I have not dealt in this language since I last thought of writing a diary, and stared at the first line. If I mistake not, you are fond of the picturesque. If moonlight and water will satisfy you, look yonder.”

The moon launched her fairy silver fleets on a double sweep of the little river round an island of reeds and two tall poplars.

“I have wondered whether I should ever see you looking at that scene,” said Renée.

He looked from it to her, and asked if Roland was well, and her father; then alluded to her husband; but the unlettering elusive moon, bright only in the extension of her beams, would not tell him what story this face, once heaven to him, wore imprinted on it. Her smile upon a parted mouth struck him as two-edged in replying: “I have good news to give you of them all: Roland is in garrison at Rouen, and will come when I telegraph. My father is in Touraine, and greets you affectionately; he hopes to come. They are both perfectly happy. My husband is travelling.”

Beauchamp was conscious of some bitter taste; unaware of what it was, though it led him to say, undesigningly: "How very handsome that M. d'Henriél is!—if I have his name correctly."

Renée answered: "He has the misfortune to be considered the handsomest young man in France."

"He has an Italian look."

"His mother was Provençale."

She put her horse in motion, saying: "I agree with you that handsome men are rarities. And, by the way, they do not set *our* world on fire quite as much as beautiful women do yours, my friend. Acknowledge so much in our favour."

He assented indefinitely. He could have wished himself away, canvassing in Bevisham. He had only to imagine himself away from her, to feel the flood of joy in being with her.

"Your husband is travelling?"

"It is his pleasure."

Could she have intended to say that this was good news to give of him as well as of the happiness of her father and brother?

"Now look on Tourdestelle," said Renée. "You will avow that for an active man to be condemned to seek repose in so dull a place, after the fatigues

of the season in Paris, it is considerably worse than for women, so I am here to dispense the hospitalities. The right wing of the château, on your left, is new. The side abutting the river is inhabited by Dame Philiberte, whom her husband imprisoned for attempting to take her pleasure in travel. I hear upon authority that she dresses in white, and wears a black crucifix. She is many centuries old, and still she lives to remind people that she married a Rouaillout. Do you not think she should have come to me to welcome me? She never has; and possibly of ladies who are disembodied we may say that they know best. For me, I desire the interview—and I am a coward: I need not state it." She ceased; presently continuing: "The other inhabitants are my sister, Agnès d'Auffray, wife of a general officer serving in Africa—my sister by marriage, and my friend; the baronne d'Orbec, a relation by marriage; M. d'Orbec, her son, a guest, and a sportsman; M. Livret, an erudite. No young ladies: I can bear much, but not their presence; girls are odious to me. I knew one in Venice."

They came within the rays of the lamp hanging above the unpretending entrance to the château. Renée's broad grey Longueville hat curved low

with its black plume on the side farthest from him. He was favoured by the gallant lift of the brim on the near side, but she had overshadowed her eyes.

“He wears a glove at his breast,” said Beauchamp.

“You speak of M. d’Henriél. He wears a glove at his breast; yes; it is mine,” said Renée.

She slipped from her horse and stood against his shoulder, as if waiting to be questioned before she rang the bell of the château.

Beauchamp alighted, burning with his unutterable questions concerning that glove.

“Lift your hat, let me beg you; let me see you,” he said.

This was not what she had expected. With one heave of her bosom, and murmuring: “I made a vow I would obey you absolutely if you came,” she raised the hat above her brows, and lightning would not have surprised him more; for there had not been a single vibration of her voice to tell him of tears running: nay, the absence of the usual French formalities in her manner of addressing him, had seemed to him to indicate her intention to put him at once on an easy friendly footing, such as would be natural to her, and

not painful to him. Now she said: "You perceive, monsieur, that I have my sentimental fits like others; but in truth I am not insensible to the picturesque or to gratitude, and I thank you sincerely for coming, considering that I wrote like a Sphinx—to evade writing *comme une folle*!"

She swept to the bell.

Standing in the arch of the entrance, she stretched her whip out to a black mass of prostrate timber, saying: "It fell in the storm at two o'clock after midnight, and you on the sea!"

CHAPTER V.

HIS HOLIDAY.

A SINGLE day was to be the term of his holiday at Tourdestelle ; but it stood forth as one of those perfect days which are rounded by an evening before and a morning after, giving him two nights under the same roof with Renée, something of a resemblance to three days of her ; anticipation and wonder filling the first, she the next, the adieu the last : every hour filled. And the first day was not over yet. He forced himself to calmness, that he might not fritter it, and walked up and down the room he was dressing in, examining its foreign decorations, and peering through the window, to quiet his nerves. He was in her own France with her ! The country borrowed hues from Renée, and lent some. This chivalrous France framed and interlaced her image, aided in idealizing her, and was in turn transfigured. Not half

so well would his native land have pleaded for the forgiveness of a British damsel who had wrecked a young man's immoderate first love. That glorified self-love requires the touch upon imagination of strangeness and an unaccustomed grace, to subdue it and make it pardon an outrage to its temples and altars, and its happy reading of the heavens, the earth too : earth foremost, we ought perhaps to say. It is an exacting heathen, best understood by a glance at what will appease it : beautiful, however, as everybody has proved ; and shall it be decried in a world where beauty is not overcommon, though it would slaughter us for its angry satisfaction, yet can be soothed by a tone of colour, as it were by a novel inscription on a sweetmeat ?

The peculiarity of Beauchamp was that he knew the slenderness of the thread which was leading him, and foresaw it twisting to a coil unless he should hold firm. His work in life was much above the love of a woman in his estimation, so he was not deluded by passion when he entered the château ; it is doubtful whether he would not hesitatingly have sacrificed one of the precious votes in Bevisham for the pleasure of kissing her hand when they were on the steps. She was his

first love and only love, married, and long ago forgiven :—married ; that is to say, she especially among women was interdicted to him by the lingering shadow of the reverential love gone by ; and if the anguish of the lover's worse than death survived in a shudder of memory at the thought of her not solely lost to him but possessed by another, it did but quicken a hunger that was three parts curiosity to see how she who had suffered this bore the change ; how like or unlike she might be to the extinct Renée ; what traces she kept of the face he had known. Her tears were startling, but tears tell of a mood, they do not tell the story of the years ; and it was that story he had such eagerness to read in one brief revelation : an eagerness born only of the last few hours, and broken by fears of a tarnished aspect ; these again being partly hopes of a coming disillusion that would restore him his independence and ask him only for pity. The slavery of the love of a woman chained like Renée was the most revolting of prospects to a man who cherished his freedom that he might work to the end of his time. Moreover, it swung a thundercloud across his holiday. He recurred to the idea of the holiday repeatedly, and the more

he did so the thinner it waxed. He was exhausting the very air and spirit of it with a mind that ran incessantly forward and back; and when he and the lady of so much speculation were again together, an incapacity of observation seemed to have come over him. In reality it was the inability to reflect on his observations. Her presence resembled those dark sunsets throwing the spell of colour across the world; when there is no question with us of morning or of night, but of that sole splendour only.

Owing to their arrival late at the château, covers were laid for them in the boudoir of Madame la marquise, where he had his hostess to himself, and certainly the opportunity of studying her. An English Navy List solitary on a shelf, and laid within it an extract of a paper announcing the return of the *Ariadne* to port, explained the mystery of her knowing that he was in England, as well as the correctness of the superscription of her letter to him. "You see, I follow you," she said.

Beauchamp asked if she read English now.

"A little; but the paper was dispatched to me by M. Vivian Ducie, of your embassy in Paris. He is in the valley."

The name of Ducie recalled Lord Palmet's description of the dark beauty of the fluttering pale gold ornaments. She was now dressed without one decoration of gold or jewel, with scarcely a wave in the silk, a modesty of style eloquent of the pride of her form.

Could those eyes fronting him under the lamp have recently shed tears? They were the living eyes of a brilliant unembarrassed lady; shields flinging light rather than well-depths inviting it.

Beauchamp tried to compare her with the Renée of Venice, and found himself thinking of the glove she had surrendered to the handsomest young man in France. The effort to recover the younger face gave him a dead creature, with the eyelashes of Renée, the cast of her mouth and throat, misty as a shape in a dream.

He could compare her with Cecilia, who never would have risked a glove, never have betrayed a tear, and was the statelier lady, not without language: but how much less vivid in feature and the gift of speech! Renée's gift of speech counted unnumbered strings which she played on with a grace that clothed the skill, and was her natural endowment—an art perfected by the education of the world. Who cannot talk!—but who can?

Discover the writers in a day when all are writing ! It is as rare an art as poetry, and in the mouths of women as enrapturing, richer than their voices in music.

This was the fascination Beauchamp felt weaving round him. Would you, that are separable from boys and mobs, and the object malignly called the Briton, prefer the celestial singing of a woman to her excellently talking? But not if it were given you to run in unison with her genius of the tongue, following her verbal ingenuities and feminine silk-flashes of meaning ; not if she led you to match her fine quick perceptions with more or less of the discreet concordance of the violoncello accompanying the viol. It is not high flying, which usually ends in heavy falling. You quit the level of earth no more than two birds that chase from bush to bush to bill in air for mutual delight to make the concert heavenly. Language flowed from Renée in affinity with the pleasure-giving laws that made the curves we recognise as beauty in sublimer arts. Accept companionship for the dearest of the good things we pray to have, and what equalled her ! Who could be her rival !

Her girl's crown of irradiated Alps began to

tremble over her dimly, as from moment to moment their intimacy warmed, and Beauchamp saw the young face vanishing out of this flower of womanhood. He did not see it appearing or present, but vanishing like the faint ray in the rosier. Nay, the blot of her faithlessness underwent a transformation : it affected him somewhat as the patch cunningly laid on near a liquid dimple in fair cheeks at once allures and evades a susceptible attention.

Unused in his French of late, he stumbled at times, and she supplied the needed phrase, taking no note of a blunder. Now men of sweet blood cannot be secretly accusing or criticizing a gracious lady. Domestic men are charged with thinking instantly of dark death when an ordinary illness befalls them ; and it may be so or not : but it is positive that the gallant man of the world, if he is in the sensitive condition, and not yet established as the lord of her, feels paralyzed in his masculine sense of leadership the moment his lady assumes the initiative and directs him : he gives up at once ; and thus have many nimble-witted dames from one clear start retained their advantage.

Concerning that glove : well ! the handsomest

young man in France wore the glove of the loveliest woman. The loveliest? The very loveliest in the purity of her French style—the woman to challenge England for a type of beauty to eclipse her. It was possible to conceive her country wagering her against all women.

If Renée had faults, Beauchamp thought of her as at sea breasting tempests, while Cecilia was a vessel lying safe in harbour, untried, however promising: and if Cecilia raised a steady light for him, it was over the shores he had left behind, while Renée had really nothing to do with warning or rescuing, or with imperilling; she welcomed him simply to a holiday in her society. He associated Cecilia strangely with the political labours she would have had him relinquish; and Renée with a pleasant state of indolence, that her lightest smile disturbed. Shun comparisons.

It is the tricky heart which sets up that balance, to jump into it on one side or the other. Comparisons come of a secret leaning that is sure to play rogue under its mien of honest dealer: so Beauchamp suffered himself to be unjust to graver England, and lost the strength she would have given him to resist a bewitchment. The case with him was, that his apprenticeship was new:

he had been trotting in harness as a veritable cab-horse of politics—he by blood a racer; and his nature craved for diversions, against his will, against his moral sense and born tenacity of spirit.

Not a word further of the glove. But at night, in his bed, the glove was a principal actor in events of extraordinary magnitude and inconsequence. He was out in the grounds with the early morning light. Coffee and sweet French bread were brought out to him, and he was informed of the hours of reunion at the château, whose mistress continued invisible. She might be sleeping. He strolled about, within view of the windows, wondering at her subservience to sleep. Tourdestelle lay in one of those Norman valleys where the river is the mother of rich pasture, and runs hidden between double ranks of tallows, aspens and poplars, that mark its winding line in the arms of trenched meadows. The high land on either side is an unwatered flat up to the horizon, little varied by dusty apple-trees planted in the stubble here and there, and brown mud walls of hamlets; a church-top, a copse, an avenue of dwarf limes leading to the three-parts farm, quarter residence of an enriched peasant striking new roots, or decayed proprietor pinching not to be severed

from ancient. Descending on the deep green valley in summer is like a change of climes. The château stood square at a branch of the river, tossing three light bridges of pretty woodwork to park and garden. Great bouquets of swelling blue and pink hydrangia nestled at its feet on shaven grass. An open window showed a cloth of colour, as in a reminiscence of Italy.

Beauchamp heard himself addressed :—" You are looking for my sister-in-law, M. Beauchamp ? "

The speaker was Madame d'Auffray, to whom he had been introduced overnight—a lady of the aquiline French outline, not ungentle.

Renée had spoken affectionately of her, he remembered. There was nothing to make him be on his guard, and he stated that he was looking for Madame de Rouaillout, and did not conceal surprise at the information that she was out on horseback.

" She is a tireless person," Madame d'Auffray remarked. " You will not miss her long. We all meet at twelve, as you know."

" I grudge an hour, for I go to-morrow," said Beauchamp.

The notification of so early a departure, or else his bluntness, astonished her. She fell to praising

Renée's goodness. He kept her to it with lively interrogations, in the manner of a guileless boy urging for eulogies of his dear absent friend. Was it duplicity in him or artlessness?

"Has she, do you think, increased in beauty?" Madame d'Auffray inquired: an insidious question, to which he replied:

"Once I thought it would be impossible."

Not so bad an answer for an Englishman, in a country where speaking is fencing; the race being little famous for dialectical alertness: but was it artful or simple?

They skirted the château, and Beauchamp had the history of Dame Philiberte recounted to him, with a mixture of Gallic irony, innuendo, openness, touchingness, ridicule, and charity novel to his ears. Madame d'Auffray struck the note of intimacy earlier than is habitual. She sounded him in this way once or twice, carelessly perusing him, and waiting for the interesting edition of the Book of Man to summarise its character by showing its pages or remaining shut. It was done delicately, like the tap of a finger-nail on a vase. He rang clear; he had nothing to conceal; and where he was reserved, that is, in speaking of the developed beauty and grace of Renée, he was trans-

parent. She read the sort of man he was; she could also hazard a guess as to the man's present state. She ventured to think him comparatively harmless—for the hour: for she was not the woman to be hoodwinked by man's dark nature because she inclined to think well of a particular man; nor was she one to trust to any man subject to temptation. The wisdom of the Frenchwoman's fortieth year forbade it. A land where the war between the sexes is honestly acknowledged, and is full of instruction, abounds in precepts; but it ill becomes the veteran to practise rigorously what she would prescribe to young women. She may discriminate; as thus:—Trust no man. Still, this man may be better than that man; and it is bad policy to distrust a reasonably guileless member of the preying sex entirely, and so to lose his good services. Hawks have their uses in destroying vermin; and though we cannot rely upon the taming of hawks, one tied by the leg in a garden preserves the fruit.

“There is a necessity for your leaving us to-morrow, M. Beauchamp?”

“I regret to say, it is imperative, madame.”

“My husband will congratulate me on the pleasure I have, and have long desired, of making

your acquaintance, and he will grieve that he has not been so fortunate; he is on service in Africa. My brother, I need not say, will deplore the mischance which has prevented him from welcoming you. I have telegraphed to him; he is at one of the Baths in Germany, and will come assuredly, if there is a prospect of finding you here? None? Supposing my telegram not to fall short of him, I may count on his being here within four days."

Beauchamp begged her to convey the proper expressions of his regret to M. le marquis.

"And M. de Croisnel? And Roland, your old comrade and brother-in-arms? What will be their disappointment!" she said.

"I intend to stop for an hour at Rouen on my way back," said Beauchamp.

She asked if her belle-sœur was aware of the short limitation of his visit.

He had not mentioned it to Madame la marquise.

"Perhaps you may be moved by the grief of a friend: Renée may persuade you to stay."

"I came imagining I could be of some use to Madame la marquise. She writes as if she were telegraphing."

"Perfectly true of her! For that matter, I saw the letter. Your looks betray a very natural

jealousy; but seeing it or not it would have been the same: she and I have no secrets. She was, I may tell you, strictly unable to write more words in the letter. Which brings me to inquire what impression M. d'Henriel made on you yesterday evening."

"He is particularly handsome."

"We women think so. Did you take him to be eccentric?"

Beauchamp gave a French jerk of the shoulders.

It confessed the incident of the glove to one who knew it as well as he: but it masked the weight he was beginning to attach to that incident, and Madame d'Auffray was misled. Truly, the English man may be just such an ex-lover, uninflamable by virtue of his blood's native coldness; endued with the frozen vanity called pride, which does not seek to be revenged. Under wary espionage, he might be a young woman's friend, though male friend of a half-abandoned wife should write himself down morally saint, mentally sage, medically incurable, if he would win our confidence.

This lady of sharp intelligence was the guardian of Renée during the foolish husband's flights about Paris and over Europe, and, for a proof of her consummate astuteness, Renée had no secrets and had

absolute liberty. And hitherto no man could build a boast on her reputation. The liberty she would have had at any cost, as Madame d'Auffray knew; and an attempt to restrict it would have created secrets.

Near upon the breakfast-hour Renée was perceived by them going toward the château at a walking pace. They crossed one of the garden bridges to intercept her. She started out of some deep meditation, and raised her whip hand to Beauchamp's greeting. "I had forgotten to tell you, monsieur, that I should be out for some hours in the morning."

"Are you aware," said Madame d'Auffray, "that M. Beauchamp leaves us to-morrow?"

"So soon?" It was uttered hardly with a tone of disappointment.

The marquise alighted, crying *holà* to the stables, caressed her horse, and sent him off with a smack on the smoking flanks to meet the groom.

"To-morrow? That is very soon; but M. Beauchamp is engaged in an election, and what have we to induce him to stay?"

"Would it not be better to tell M. Beauchamp why he was invited to come?" rejoined Madame d'Auffray.

The sombre light in Renée's eyes quickened through shadowy spheres of surprise and pain to resolution. She cried, "You have my full consent," and left them.

Madame d'Auffray smiled at Beauchamp, to excuse the childishness of the little story she was about to relate; she gave it in the essence, without a commencement or an ending. She had in fact but two or three hurried minutes before the breakfast-bell would ring; and the fan she opened and shut, and at times shaded her head with, was nearly as explicit as her tongue.

He understood that Renée had staked her glove on his coming within a certain number of hours to the briefest wording of invitation possible. Owing to his detention by the storm, M. d'Henriél had won the bet, and now insisted on wearing the glove. "He is the privileged young madman our women make of a handsome youth," said Madame d'Auffray.

Where am I? thought Beauchamp—in what land, he would have phrased it, of whirlwinds catching the wits and whipping the passions? Calmer than they, but unable to command them, and guessing that Renée's errand of the morning, by which he had lost hours of her, pertained to

the glove, he said quiveringly, "Madame la marquise objects?"

"We," replied Madame d'Auffray, "contend that the glove was not loyally won. The wager was upon your coming to the invitation, not upon your conquering the elements. As to his flaunting the glove for a favour, I would ask you, whom does he advertise by that? 'Gloves do not wear white; which fact compromises none but the wearer. He picked it up from the ground, and does not restore it; that is all. You see a boy who catches at anything to placard himself. There is a compatriot of yours, a M. Ducie, who assured us you must be with an uncle in your county of Sussex. Of course we ran the risk of the letter missing you, but the chance was worth a glove. Can you believe it, M. Beauchamp? it was I, old woman as I am, I who provoked the silly wager. I have long desired to meet you; and we have little society here, we are desperate with loneliness, half mad with our whims. I said that, if you were what I had heard of you, you would come to us at a word. They dared Madame la marquise to say the same. I wished to see the friend of Frenchmen, as M. Roland calls you; not merely to see him—to know him, whether he is this

perfect friend whose absolute devotion has impressed my dear sister Renée's mind. She respects you: that is a sentiment scarcely complimentary to young men. She places you above human creatures: possibly you may not dislike to be worshipped. It is not to be rejected when one's influence is powerful for good. But you leave us to-morrow!"

"I might stay. . . ." Beauchamp hesitated to name the number of hours. He stood divided between a sense of the bubbling shallowness of the life about him, and an idea, grave as an eye dwelling on blood, of sinister things below it.

"I may stay another day or two," he said, "if I can be of any earthly service."

Madame d'Auffray bowed as to a friendly decision on his part, saying, "It would be a thousand pities to disappoint M. Roland; and it will be offering my brother an amicable chance. I will send him word that you await him; at least, that you defer your departure as long as possible. Ah! now you perceive, M. Beauchamp, now you have become aware of our purely infantile plan to bring you over to us, how very ostensible a punishment it would be were you to remain so short a period."

Having no designs, he was neither dupe nor sceptic; but he felt oddly entangled, and the dream of his holiday had fled like morning's beams, as a self-deception will at a very gentle shaking.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BOAT.

MADAME D'AUFFRAY passed Renée, whispering on her way to take her seat at the breakfast-table.

Renée did not condescend to whisper. "Roland will be glad," she said aloud.

Her low eyelids challenged Beauchamp for a look of indifference. There was more for her to unbosom than Madame d'Auffray had revealed, but the comparative innocence of her position in this new light prompted her to meet him defiantly, if he chose to feel injured. He was attracted by a happy contrast of colour between her dress and complexion, together with a cavalierly charm in the sullen brows she lifted; and seeing the reverse of a look of indifference on his face, after what he had heard of her frivolousness, she had a fear that it existed.

“Are we not to have M. d’Henriel to-day? he amuses me,” the baronne d’Orbec remarked.

“If he would learn that he was fashioned for that purpose!” exclaimed little M. Livret.

“Do not ask young men for too much head, my friend; he would cease to be amusing.”

“D’Henriel should have been up in the fields at ten this morning,” said M. d’Orbec. “As to his head, I back him for a clever shot.”

“Or a duelling-sword,” said Renée. “It is a quality, count it for what we will. Your favourite, Madame la baronne, is interdicted from presenting himself here so long as he persists in offending me.”

She was requested to explain, and, with the fair ingenuousness which outshines innocence, she touched on the story of the glove.

Ah! what a delicate, what an exciting, how subtle a question!

Had M. d’Henriel the right to possess it? and, having that, had he the right to wear it at his breast?

Beauchamp was dragged into the discussion of the case.

Renée waited curiously for his judgment.

Pleading an apology for the stormy weather, which had detained him, and for his ignorance that

so precious an article was at stake, he held that, by the terms of the wager, the glove was lost; the claim to wear it was a matter of taste.

“Matters of taste, monsieur, are not, I think, decided by weapons in your country?” said M. d’Orbec.

“We have no duelling,” said Beauchamp.

The Frenchman imagined the confession to be somewhat humbling, and generously added, “But you have your volunteers—a magnificent spectacle of patriotism and national readiness for defence!”

A shrewd pang traversed Beauchamp’s heart, as he looked back on his country from the outside and the inside, thinking what amount of patriotic readiness the character of the volunteering signified, in the face of all that England has to maintain. Like a politic islander, he allowed the patriotic spectacle to be imagined; reflecting that it did a sort of service abroad, and had only to be unmasked at home.

“But you surrendered the glove, marquise!” The baronne d’Orbec spoke judicially.

“I flung it to the ground; that made it neutral,” said Renée.

“Hum. He wears it with the dust on it, certainly.”

“And for how long a time,” M. Livret wished to know, “does this amusing young man proclaim his intention of wearing the glove?”

“Until he can see with us that his Order of Merit is utter kid,” said Madame d’Auffray; and as she had spoken more or less neatly, satisfaction was left residing in the ear of the assembly, and the glove was permitted to be swept away on a fresh tide of dialogue.

The admirable candour of Renée in publicly alluding to M. d’Henriel’s foolishness restored a peep of his holiday to Beauchamp. Madame d’Auffray took note of the effect it produced, and quite excused her sister-in-law for intending to produce it; but that speaking out the half-truth that we may put on the mask of the whole, is no new trick; and believing as she did that Renée was in danger with the handsome Count Henri, the practice of such a kind of honesty on her part appeared alarming.

Still it is imprudent to press for confidences when our friend’s heart is manifestly trifling with sincerity. Who knows but that some foregone reckless act or word may have superinduced the healthy shame which cannot speak, which must disguise itself, and is honesty in that form, but

roughly troubled would resolve to rank dishonesty? So thought the patient lady, wiser in that than in her perceptions.

Renée made a boast of not persuading her guest to stay, avowing that she would not willingly have him go. Praising him equably, she listened to praise of him with animation. She was dumb and statue-like when Count Henri's name was mentioned. Did not this betray liking for one, subjection to the other? Indeed, there was an Asiatic splendour of animal beauty about M. d'Henriél that would be serpent with most women, Madame d'Auffray conceived; why not with the deserted Renée, who adored beauty of shape and colour, and was compassionate toward a rashness of character that her own unnatural solitariness and quick spirit made her emulous of?

Meanwhile Beauchamp's day of adieu succeeded that of his holiday, and no adieu was uttered. The hours at Tourdestelle had a singular turn for slipping. Interlinked and all as one they swam by, brought evening, brought morning, never varied. They might have varied with such a division as when flame lights up the night or a tempest shades the day, had Renée chosen; she had that power over him. She had no wish to

use it; perhaps she apprehended what it would cause her to forfeit. She wished him to respect her; felt that she was under the shadow of the glove, slight though it was while it was nothing but a tale of a lady and a glove; and her desire, like his, was that they should meet daily and dream on, without a variation. He noticed how seldom she led him beyond the grounds of the château. They were to make excursions when her brother came, she said. Roland de Croisnel's colonel, Coïn de Grandchamp, happened to be engaged in a duel, which great business detained Roland. It supplied Beauchamp with an excuse for staying, that he was angry with himself for being pleased to have; so he attacked the practice of duelling, and next the shrug, wherewith M. Livret and M. d'Orbec sought at first to defend the foul custom, or apologize for it, or plead for it philosophically, or altogether cast it off their shoulders; for the literal interpretation of the shrug in argument is beyond human capacity; it is the point of speech beyond our treasury of language. He attacked the shrug, as he thought, very temperately; but in controlling his native vehemence he grew perforce of repression, and of incompetency to deliver himself copiously in French,

sarcastic. In fine, his contrast of the pretence of their noble country to head civilisation, and its encouragement of a custom so barbarous, offended M. d'Orbec and irritated M. Livret. The latter delivered a brief essay on Gallic blood; the former maintained that Frenchmen were the best judges of their own ways and deeds. Politeness reigned, but politeness is compelled to throw off cloak and jacket when it steps into the arena to meet the encounter of a bull. Beauchamp drew on their word 'solidaire' to assist him in declaring that no civilised nation could be thus independent. Imagining himself in the France of brave ideas, he contrived to strike out sparks of Legitimist ire around him, and found himself breathing the atmosphere of the most primitive nursery of Toryism. Again he encountered the shrug, and he would have it a verbal matter. M. d'Orbec gravely recited the programme of the country party in France. M. Livret carried the war across Channel. You English have retired from active life, like the exhausted author, to turn critic—the critic that sneers: unless we copy you abjectly we are execrable. And what is that sneer? Materially it is an acrid saliva, withering where it drops; in the way of fellowship it is a corpse-

emanation. As to wit, the sneer is the cloak of clumsiness; it is the Pharisee's incense, the hypocrite's pity, the post of exaltation of the fat citizen, &c.; but, said M. Livret, the people using it should have a care that they keep powerful: they make no friends. He terminated with this warning to a nation not devoid of superior merit. M. d'Orbec said less, and was less consoled by his outburst.

In the opinion of Mr. Vivian Ducie, present at the discussion, Beauchamp provoked the lash; for, in the first place, a beautiful woman's apparent favourite should be particularly discreet in all that he says; and next, he should have known that the Gallic shrug over matters political is volcanic—it is the heaving of the mountain, and, like the proverbial Russ, leaps up Tartarly at a scratch. Our newspapers also had been flea-biting M. Livret and his countrymen of late; and, to conclude, over in old England you may fly out against what you will, and there is little beyond a motherly smile, a nurse's rebuke, or a fool's rudeness, to answer you. In quick-blooded France you have whip for whip, sneer, sarcasm, claw, fang, tussle, in a trice; and if you choose to comport yourself according to your insular notion

of freedom, you are bound to march out to the measured ground at an invitation. To begin by saying that your principles are opposed to it, naturally excites a malicious propensity to try your temper.

A further cause, unknown to Mr. Ducie, of M. Livret's irritation was, that Beauchamp had vexed him on a subject peculiarly dear to him. The celebrated Château Dianet was about to be visited by the guests at Tourdestelle. In common with some French philosophers and English matrons, he cherished a sentimental sad enthusiasm for royal concubines; and when dilating upon one among them, the ruins of whose family's castle stood in the neighbourhood—Agnès, who was really a kindly soul, though not virtuous—M. Livret had been traversed by Beauchamp with questions as to the condition of the people, the peasantry, that were sweated in taxes to support these lovely frailties. They came oddly from a man in the fire of youth, and a little old gentleman somewhat seduced by the melting image of his theme might well blink at him to ask, of what flesh are you, then? His historic harem was insulted. Personally too, the fair being picturesquely soiled, intrepid in her amorousness, and

ultimately absolved by repentance (a shuddering narrative of her sins under showers of salt drops), cried to him to champion her. Excited by the supposed cold critical mind in Beauchamp, M. Livret painted and painted his lady, tricked her in casuistical niceties, scenes of pomp and boudoir pathos, with many shifting sidelights and a risky word or two, until Renée cried out, "Spare us the esprit Gaulois, M. Livret!" There was much to make him angry with this Englishman.

"The esprit Gaulois is the sparkle of crystal common sense, madame, and may we never abandon it for a Puritanism that hides its face to conceal its filthiness, like a stagnant pond," replied M. Livret flashing.

"It seems, then, that there are two ways of being objectionable," said Renée.

"Ah! Madame la marquise, your wit is French," he breathed low; "keep your heart so!"

Both M. Livret and M. d'Orbec had forgotten that when Count Henri d'Henriél was received at Tourdestelle, the arrival of the Englishman was pleasantly anticipated by them as an eclipse of the handsome boy; but a foreign interloper is quickly dispossessed of all means of pleasing save that one of taking his departure; and they now

talked of Count Henri's disgrace and banishment in a very warm spirit of sympathy, not at all seeing why it should be made to depend upon the movements of this M. Beauchamp, as it appeared to be. Madame d'Auffray heard some of their dialogue, and hurried with a mouth full of comedy to Renée, who did not reproach them for silly creatures, as would be done elsewhere. On the contrary, she appreciated a scene of such absolute comedy, recognising it instantly as a situation plucked out of human nature. She compared them to republicans that regretted the sovereign they had deposed for a pretender to start up and govern them.

"Who hurries them round to the legitimate king again!" said Madame d'Auffray.

Renée cast her chin up: "How, my dear?"

"Your husband."

"What of him?"

"He is returning."

"What brings him?"

"You should ask who, my Renée! I was sure he would not hear of M. Beauchamp's being here, without an effort to return and do the honours of the château."

Renée looked hard at her, saying, "How thought-

ful of you ! You must have made use of the telegraph wires to inform him that M. Beauchamp was with us."

"More ; I made use of them to inform him that M. Beauchamp was expected."

"And that was enough to bring him ! He pays M. Beauchamp a wonderful compliment."

"Such as he would pay to no other man, my Renée. Virtually it is the highest of compliments to you. I say that to M. Beauchamp's credit ; for Raoul has met him, and, whatever his personal feeling may be, must know your friend is a man of honour."

"My friend is . . . yes, I have no reason to think otherwise," Renée replied. Her husband's persistent and exclusive jealousy of Beauchamp was the singular point in the character of one who appeared to have no sentiment of the kind as regarded men that were much less than men of honour. "So, then, my sister Agnès," she said, "you suggested the invitation of M. Beauchamp for the purpose of spurring my husband to return ! Apparently he and I are surrounded by plotters."

"Am I so very guilty ?" said Madame d'Auffray.

"If that mad boy, half idiot, half panther,

were by chance to insult M. Beauchamp, you would feel so."

"You have taken precautions to prevent their meeting; and besides, M. Beauchamp does not fight."

Renée flushed crimson.

Madame d'Auffray added, "I do not say that he is other than a perfectly brave and chivalrous gentleman."

"Oh!" cried Renée, "do not say it, if ever you should imagine it. Bid Roland speak of him. He is changed, oppressed: I did him a terrible wrong..." She checked herself. "But the chief thing to do is to keep M. d'Henriél away from him. I suspect M. d'Orbec of a design to make them clash: and you, my dear, will explain why, to flatter me. Believe me, I thirst for flattery; I have had none since M. Beauchamp came: and you, so acute, must have seen the want of it in my face. But you, so skilful, Agnès, will manage these men. Do you know, Agnès, that the pride of a woman so incredibly clever as you have shown me you are should resent their intrigues and overthrow them. As for me, I thought I could command M. d'Henriél, and I find he has neither reason in him nor obedience. Singular to

say, I knew him just as well a week back as I do now, and then I liked him for his qualities—or the absence of any. But how shall we avoid him on the road to Dianet? He is aware that we are going.”

“Take M. Beauchamp by boat,” said Madame d’Auffray.

“The river winds to within a five minutes’ walk of Dianet; we could go by boat,” Renée said musingly. “I thought of the boat. But does it not give the man a triumph that we should seem to try to elude him? What matter! Still, I do not like him to be the falcon, and Nevil Beauchamp the . . . little bird. So it is, because we began badly, Agnès!”

“Was it my fault?”

“Mine. Tell me: the legitimate king returns—when?”

“In two days or three.”

“And his rebel subjects are to address him—how?”

Madame d’Auffray smote the point of a finger softly on her cheek.

“Will they be pardoned?” said Renée.

“It is for *him* to kneel, my dearest.”

“Legitimacy kneeling for forgiveness is a painful

picture, Agnès. Legitimacy jealous of a foreigner is an odd one. However, we are women, born to our lot. If we could rise en masse!—but we cannot. Embrace me.”

Madame d'Auffray embraced her, without an idea that she assisted in performing the farewell of their confidential intimacy.

When Renée trifled with Count Henri, it was playing with fire, and she knew it; and once or twice she bemoaned to Agnès d'Auffray her abandoned state, which condemned her, for the sake of the sensation of living, to have recourse to perilous pastimes; but she was revolted, as at a piece of treachery, that Agnès should have suggested the invitation of Nevil Beauchamp with the secret design of winning home her husband to protect her. This, for one reason, was because Beauchamp gave her no notion of danger; none, therefore, of requiring protection: and the presence of her husband could not but be hateful to him, an undeserved infliction. To her it was intolerable that they should be brought into contact. It seemed almost as hard that she should have to dismiss Beauchamp to preclude their meeting. She remembered, nevertheless, a certain desperation of mind, scarce imaginable in the

retrospect, by which, trembling, fever-smitten, scorning herself, she had been reduced to hope for Nevil Beauchamp's coming as for a rescue. The night of the storm had roused her heart. Since then his perfect friendliness had lulled, his air of thoughtfulness had interested it; and the fancy that he, who neither reproached nor sentimentalised, was to be infinitely compassionated, stirred up remorse. She could not tell her friend Agnès of these feelings while her feelings were angered against her friend. So she talked lightly of 'the legitimate king,' and they embraced: a situation of comedy quite as true as that presented by the humble admirers of the brilliant châtelaine.

Beauchamp had the pleasure of rowing Madame la marquise to the short shaded walk separating the river from Château Dianet, whither M. d'Orbec went on horseback, and Madame d'Auffray and M. Livret were driven. The portrait of Diane of Dianet was praised for the beauty of the dame, a soft-fleshed acutely featured person, a fresh-of-the-toilette face, of the configuration of head of the cat, relieved by a delicately aquiline nose, and it could only be the cat of fairy metamorphosis which should stand for that illustration: brows and chin made an acceptable triangle, and eyes

and mouth could be what she pleased for mice or monarchs. M. Livret did not gainsay the impeachment of her by a great French historian, tender to women, to frailties in particular—yes, she was cold, perhaps grasping: but dwell upon her in her character of woman; conceive her existing, to estimate the charm of her graciousness. Name the two countries which alone have produced THE WOMAN, the ideal woman, the woman of art, whose beauty, grace, and wit offer her to our contemplation in an atmosphere above the ordinary conditions of the world: these two countries are France and Greece! None other give you the perfect woman, the woman who conquers time, as she conquers men, by virtue of the divinity in her blood; and she, as little as illustrious heroes, is to be judged by the laws and standards of lesser creatures. In fashioning her, nature and art have worked together: in her, poetry walks the earth. The question of good or bad is entirely to be put aside: it is a rustic's impertinence—a bourgeois' vulgarity. She is pre-eminent, voilà tout. Has she grace and beauty? Then you are answered: such possessions are an assurance that her influence in the aggregate must be for good. Thunder, destructive to insects,

refreshes earth : so she. So sang the rhapsodist. Possibly a scholarly little French gentleman, going down the grey slopes of sixty to second childishness, recovers a second juvenility in these enthusiasms ; though what it is that inspires our matrons to take up with them is unimaginable. M. Livret's ardour was a contrast to the young Englishman's vacant gaze at Diane, and the symbols of her goddessship running along the walls, the bed, the cabinets, everywhere that the chaste device could find frontage and a corner.

M. d'Orbec remained outside the château inspecting the fish-ponds. When they rejoined him he complimented Beauchamp semi-ironically on his choice of the river's quiet charms in preference to the dusty roads. Madame de Rouaillout said, "Come, M. d'Orbec ; what if you surrender your horse to M. Beauchamp, and row me back ?" He changed colour, hesitated, and declined : he had an engagement to call on M. d'Henriél.

"When did you see him ?" said she.

He was confused. "It is not long since, madame."

"On the road ?"

"Coming along the road."

"And our glove ?"

“Madame la marquise, if I may trust my memory, M. d’Henriel was not in official costume.”

Renée allowed herself to be reassured.

A ceremonious visit that M. Livret insisted on was paid to the chapel of Diane, where she had worshipped and laid her widowed ashes, which, said M. Livret, the fiends of the Revolution would not let rest.

He raised his voice to denounce them.

It was Roland de Croisnel that answered: “The Revolution was our grandmother, monsieur, and I cannot hear her abused.”

Renée caught her brother by the hand. He stepped out of the chapel with Beauchamp to embrace him; then kissed Renée, and, remarking that she was pale, fetched flooding colour to her cheeks. He was hearty air to them after the sentimentalism they had been hearing. Beauchamp and he walked like loving comrades at school, questioning, answering, chattering, laughing,—a beautiful sight to Renée, and she looked at Agnès d’Auffray to ask her whether ‘this Englishman’ was not one of them in his frankness and freshness.

Roland stopped to turn to Renée. “I met D’Henriel on my ride here,” he said with a sharp

inquisitive expression of eye that passed immediately.

"You rode here from Tourdestelle, then," said Renée.

"Has he been one of the company, marquise?"

"Did he ride by you without speaking, Roland?"

"Thus." Roland described a Spanish caballero's formallest salutation, saying to Beauchamp, "Not the best sample of our young Frenchman;—woman-spoiled! Not that the better kind of article need be spoiled by them—Heaven forbid that! Friend Nevil," he spoke lower, "do you know, you have something of the prophet in you? I remember: much has come true. An old spoiler of women is worse than one spoiled by them! Ah, well: and Madame Culling? and your seven-foot-high uncle? And have you a fleet to satisfy Nevil Beauchamp yet? You shall see a trial of our new field-guns at Rouen."

They were separated with difficulty. Renée wished her brother to come in the boat; and he would have done so, but for his objection to have his Arab bestridden by a man unknown to him.

"My love is a four-foot, and here's my love," Roland said, going outside the gilt gate-rails to the graceful little beast that acknowledged his

ownership with an arch and swing of the neck round to him.

He mounted and called, "Au revoir, M. le capitaine."

"Au revoir, M. le commandant," cried Beauchamp.

"Admiral and marshal, each of us in good season," said Roland. "Thanks to your promotion, I had a letter from my sister. Advance a grade, and I may get another."

Beauchamp thought of the strange gulf now between him and the time when he pined to be a commodore, and an admiral. The gulf was bridged as he looked at Renée petting Roland's horse.

"Is there in the world so lovely a creature?" she said, and appealed fondlingly to the beauty that brings out beauty, and, bidding it disdain rivalry, rivalled it insomuch that in a moment of trance Beauchamp with his bodily vision beheld her, not there, but on the Lido of Venice, shining out of the years gone.

Old love reviving may be love of a phantom after all. We can, if it must revive, keep it to the limits of a ghostly love. The ship in the Arabian tale coming within the zone of the magnetic mountain, flies all its bolts and bars, and

becomes sheer timbers, but that is the carelessness of the ship's captain; and hitherto Beauchamp could applaud himself for steering with prudence, while Renée's attractions warned more than they beckoned. She was magnetic to him as no other woman was. Then whither his course but homeward?

After they had taken leave of their host and hostess of Château Dianet, walking across a meadow to a line of charmilles that led to the river-side, he said, "Now I have seen Roland I shall have to decide upon going."

"Wantonly won is deservedly lost," said Renée. "But do not disappoint my Roland much because of his foolish sister. Is he not looking handsome? And he is young to be a commandant, for we have no interest at this Court. They kept him out of the last war! My father expects to find you at Tourdestelle, and how account to him for your hurried flight?—save with the story of that which brought you to us!"

"The glove? I shall beg for the fellow to it before I depart, marquise."

"You perceived my disposition to light-headedness, monsieur, when I was a girl."

"I said that I—but the past is dust. Shall I ever see you in England?"

"That country seems to frown on me. But if I do not go there, nor you come here, except to imperious mysterious invitations, which will not be repeated, the future is dust as well as the past: for me, at least. Dust here, dust there!—if one could be like a silk-worm, and live lying on the leaf one feeds on, it would be a sort of answer to the riddle—living out of the dust, and in the present. I find none in my religion. No doubt, Madame de Brézé did: why did you call Diane so to M. Livret?"

She looked at him smiling as they came out of the shadow of the clipped trees. He was glancing about for the boat.

"The boat is across the river," Renée said, in a voice that made him seek her eyes for an explanation of the dead sound. She was very pale. "You have perfect command of yourself? For my sake!" she said.

He looked round.

Standing up in the boat, against the opposite bank, and leaning with crossed legs on one of the sculls planted in the gravel of the river, Count Henri d'Henriél's handsome figure presented itself to Beauchamp's gaze.

With a dryness that smacked of his uncle

Everard Romfrey, Beauchamp said of the fantastical posture of the young man, "One can do that on fresh water."

Renée did not comprehend the sailor-sarcasm of the remark; but she also commented on the statuesque appearance of Count Henri: "Is the pose for photography or for sculpture?"

Neither of them showed a sign of surprise or of impatience.

M. d'Henriél could not maintain the attitude. He uncrossed his legs deliberately, drooped hat in hand, and came paddling over; apologized indolently, and said, "I am not, I believe, trespassing on the grounds of Tourdestelle, Madame le marquise!"

"You happen to be in my boat, M. le comte," said Renée.

"Permit me, madame." He had set one foot on shore, with his back to Beauchamp, and reached a hand to assist her step into the boat.

Beauchamp caught fast hold of the bows while Renée laid a finger on Count Henri's shoulder to steady herself.

The instant she had taken her seat, Count Henri dashed the scull's blade at the bank to push off with her, but the boat was fast. His

manceuvre had been foreseen. Beauchamp swung on board like the last seaman of a launch, and crouched as the boat rocked away to the stream; and still Count Henri leaned on the scull, not in a chosen attitude, but for positive support. He had thrown his force into the blow, to push off triumphantly and leave his rival standing. It occurred that the boat's brief resistance and rocking away agitated his artificial equipoise, and, by the operation of inexorable laws, the longer he leaned across an extending surface the more was he dependent; so that when the measure of the water exceeded the length of his failing support on land, there was no help for it: he pitched in. His grimace of chagrin at the sight of Beauchamp securely established, had scarcely yielded to the grimness of feature of the man who feels he must go, as he took the plunge; and these two emotions combined to make an extraordinary countenance.

He went like a gallant gentleman; he threw up his heels to clear the boat, dropping into about four feet of water, and his first remark on rising was, "I trust, madame, I have not had the misfortune to splash you."

Then he waded to the bank, scrambled to his feet, and drew out his moustachios to their curving

ends. Renée nodded sharply to Beauchamp to bid him row. He, with less of wisdom, having seized the floating scull abandoned by Count Henri, and got it ready for the stroke, said a word of condolence to the dripping man.

Count Henri's shoulders and neck expressed a kind of negative that, like a wet dog's shake of the head, ended in an involuntary whole-length shudder, dog-like and deplorable to behold. He must have been conscious of this miserable exhibition of himself; he turned to Beauchamp: "You are, I am informed, a sailor, monsieur. I compliment you on your naval tactics: our next meeting will be on land. Au revoir, monsieur. Madame la marquise, I have the honour to salute you."

With these words he retreated.

"Row quickly, I beg of you," Renée said to Beauchamp. Her desire was to see Roland, and open her heart to her brother; for now it had to be opened. Not a minute must be lost to prevent further mischief. And who was guilty?—she. Her heart clamoured of her guilt to waken a cry of innocence. A disdainful pity for the superb young savage just made ludicrous, relieved him of blame, implacable though he was. He was nothing; an accident—a fool. But he might

become a terrible instrument of punishment. The thought of that possibility gave it an aspect of retribution, under which her cry of innocence was insufferable in its feebleness. It would have been different with her if Beauchamp had taken advantage of her fever of anxiety, suddenly appeased by the sight of him on the evening of his arrival at Tourdestelle after the storm, to attempt a renewal of their old broken love-bonds. Then she would have seen only a conflict between two men, neither of whom could claim a more secret right than the other to be called her lover, and of whom both were on a common footing, and partly despicable. But Nevil Beauchamp had behaved as her perfect true friend, in the character she had hoped for when she summoned him. The sense of her guilt lay in the recognition that he had saved her. From what? From the consequences of delirium rather than from love: surely delirium, founded on delusion; love had not existed. She had said to Count Henri, "You speak to me of love. I was beloved when I was a girl, before my marriage, and for years I have not seen or corresponded with the man who loved me, and I have only to lift my finger now and he would come to me, and not once would he speak

to me of love." Those were the words originating the wager of the glove. But what of her, if Nevil Beauchamp had not come?

Her heart jumped, and she blushed ungovernably in his face, as if he were seeing her withdraw her foot from the rock's edge, and had that instant rescued her. But how came it she had been so helpless? She could ask; she could not answer.

Thinking, talking to her heart, was useless. The deceiver simply feigned utter condemnation to make partial comfort acceptable. She burned to do some act of extreme self-abasement that should bring an unwonted degree of wrath on her externally, and so re-entitle her to consideration in her own eyes. She burned to be interrogated, to have to weep, to be scorned, abused, and forgiven, that she might say she did not deserve pardon. Beauchamp was too English, evidently too blind, for the description of judge-accuser she required; one who would worry her without mercy, until—disgraced by the excess of torture inflicted—he should reinstate her by as much as he had overcharged his accusation, and a little more. Reasonably enough, instinctively in fact, she shunned the hollow of an English ear. A surprise was in reserve for her.

Beauchamp gave up rowing. As he rested on the sculls, his head was bent and turned toward the bank. Renée perceived an over-swollen monster gourd that had strayed from a garden adjoining the river, and hung sliding heavily down the bank on one greenish yellow cheek, in prolonged contemplation of its image in the mirror below. Apparently this obese Narcissus enchained his attention.

She tapped her foot. "Are you tired of rowing, monsieur?"

"It was exactly here," said he, "that you told me you expected your husband's return."

She glanced at the gourd, bit her lip, and, colouring, said, "At what point of the river did I request you to congratulate me on it?"

She would not have said that, if she had known the thoughts at work within him.

He set the boat swaying from side to side, and at once the hugeous reflection of that conceivably self-enamoured bulk quavered and distended, and was shattered in a thousand dancing fragments, to reunite and recompose its maudlin air of imaged satisfaction.

She began to have a vague idea that he was indulging grotesque fancies.

Very strangely, the ridiculous thing, in the shape of an over-stretched likeness, that she never would have seen had he indicated it directly, became transfused from his mind to hers by his abstract half-amused observation of the great dancing gourd—that capering antiquity, lumbering volatility, wandering, self-adored, gross bald Cupid, elatest of nondescripts! Her senses imagined the impressions agitating Beauchamp's, and exaggerated them beyond limit; and when he amazed her with a straight look into her eyes, and the words, "Better let it be a youth—and live, than fall back to that!" she understood him immediately; and, together with her old fear of his impetuosity and downrightness, came the vivid recollection, like a bright finger pointing upon darkness, of what foul destiny, magnified by her present abhorrence of it, he would have saved her from in the days of Venice and Touraine, and unto what loathly example of the hideous grotesque she, in spite of her lover's foresight on her behalf, had become allied.

Face to face as they sat, she had no defence for her scarlet cheeks; her eyes wavered.

"We will land here; the cottagers shall row the boat up," she said.

"Somewhere — anywhere," said Beauchamp. "But I must speak. I will tell you now. I do not think you to blame—barely; not in my sight; though no man living would have suffered as I should. Probably some days more and you would have been lost. You looked for me! Trust your instinct now I'm with you as well as when I'm absent. Have you courage? that's the question. You have years to live. Can you live them in this place—with honour? and alive really?"

Renée's eyes grew wide; she tried to frown, and her brows merely twitched; to speak, and she was inarticulate. His madness, miraculous penetration, and the super-masculine charity in him, unknown to the world of young men in their treatment of women, excited, awed, and melted her.

He had seen the whole truth of her relations with M. d'Henriel!—the wickedness of them in one light, the innocence in another; and without prompting a confession he forgave her. Could she believe it? This was love, and manly love.

She yearned to be on her feet, to feel the possibility of an escape from him.

She pointed to a landing. He sprang to the bank. "It could end in nothing else," he said,

“unless you beat cold to me. And now I have your hand, Renée! It’s the hand of a living woman, you have no need to tell me that; but faithful to her comrade! I can swear it for her—faithful to a *true* alliance! You are not married, you are simply chained: and you are terrorized. What a perversion of you it is! It wrecks you. But with me? Am I not your lover? You and I are one life. What have we suffered for but to find this out and act on it? Do I not know that a woman lives, and is not the rooted piece of vegetation hypocrites and tyrants expect her to be? Act on it, I say; own me, break the chains, come to me; say, Nevil Beauchamp or death! And death for you? But you are poisoned and thwarted—dying, as you live now: worse, shaming the Renée I knew. Ah—Venice! But now we are both of us wiser and stronger: we have gone through fire. Who foretold it? This day, and this misery and perversion that we can turn to joy, if we will—if you will! No heart to dare is no heart to love!—answer that! Shall I see you cower away from me again? Not this time!”

He swept on in a flood, uttered mad things, foolish things, and things of an insight electrifying to her. Through the cottager’s garden, across

a field, and within the park gates of Tourdestelle it continued unceasingly ; and deeply was she won by the rebellious note in all that he said, deeply too by his disregard of the vulgar arts of wooers : she detected none. He did not speak so much to win as to help her to see with her own orbs. Nor was it roughly or chidingly, though it was absolutely, that he stripped her of the veil a wavering woman will keep to herself from her heart's lord if she can.

They arrived long after the boat at Tourdestelle, and Beauchamp might believe he had prevailed with her, but for her forlorn repetition of the question he had put to her idly and as a new idea, instead of significantly, with a recollection and a doubt—"Have I courage, Nevil?"

The grain of commonsense in cowardice caused her to repeat it when her reason was bedimmed, and passion assumed the right to show the way of right and wrong.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BLACKBURN TUCKHAM.

SOME time after Beauchamp had been seen renewing his canvass in Bevisham a report reached Mount Laurels that he was lame of a leg. The wits of the opposite camp revived the FRENCH MARQUEES, but it was generally acknowledged that he had come back without the lady: she was invisible. Cecilia Halkett rode home with her father on a dusky Autumn evening, and found the card of Commander Beauchamp awaiting her. He might have stayed to see her, she thought. Ladies are not customarily so very late in returning from a ride on chill evenings of autumn. Only a quarter of an hour was between his visit and her return. The shortness of the interval made it appear the deeper gulf. She noticed that her father particularly inquired of the man-servant whether Captain Beauchamp limped. It seemed a piece of kindly anxiety on his

part. The captain was mounted, the man said. Cecilia was conscious of rumours being abroad relating to Nevil's expedition to France; but he had enemies, and was at war with them, and she held herself indifferent to tattle. This card bearing his name, recently in his hand, was much more insidious and precise. She took it to her room to look at it. Nothing but his name and naval title was inscribed; no pencilled line; she had not expected to discover one. The simple card was her dark light, as a handkerchief, a flower, a knot of riband, has been for men luridly illuminated by such small sparks to fling their beams on shadows and read the monstrous things for truths. Her purer virgin blood was not inflamed. She read the signification of the card sadly as she did clearly. What she could not so distinctly imagine was, how he could reconcile the devotion to his country, which he had taught her to put her faith in, with his unhappy subjection to Madame de Rouaillout. How could the nobler sentiment exist side by side with one that was lawless? Or was the wildness characteristic of his political views proof of a nature inclining to disown moral ties? She feared so; he did not speak of the clergy respectfully. Reading in the dark, she was forced

to rely on her social instincts, and she distrusted her personal feelings as much as she could, for she wished to know the truth of him ; anything, pain and heartrending, rather than the shutting of the eyes in an unworthy abandonment to mere emotion and fascination. Cecilia's love could not be otherwise given to a man, however near she might be drawn to love—though she should suffer the pangs of love cruelly.

She placed his card in her writing-desk ; she had his likeness there. Commander Beauchamp encouraged the art of photography, as those that make long voyages do, in reciprocating what they petition their friends for. Mrs. Rosamund Culling had a whole collection of photographs of him, equal to a visual history of his growth in chapters, from boyhood to midshipmanship and to manhood. The specimen possessed by Cecilia was one of a couple that Beauchamp had forwarded to Mrs. Grancey Lespel on the day of his departure for France, and was a present from that lady, purchased, like so many presents, at a cost Cecilia would have paid heavily in gold to have been spared, namely, a public blush. She was allowed to make her choice, and she chose the profile, repeating a remark of Mrs. Culling's, that it suggested an arrow-head in

the up-flight; whereupon Mr. Stukely Culbrett had said, "Then there is the man, for he is undoubtedly a projectile;" nor were politically-hostile punsters on an arrow-head inactive. But Cecilia was thinking of the side-face she (less intently than Beauchamp at hers) had glanced at during the drive into Bevisham. At that moment, she fancied Madame de Rouaillout might be doing likewise; and oh that she had the portrait of the French lady as well!

Next day her father tossed her a photograph of another gentleman, coming out of a letter he had received from old Mrs. Beauchamp. He asked her opinion of it. She said, "I think he would have suited Bevisham better than Captain Baskellett." Of the original, who presented himself at Mount Laurels in the course of the week, she had nothing to say, except that he was very like the photograph, very unlike Nevil Beauchamp. "Yes, there I'm of your opinion," her father observed. The gentleman was Mr. Blackburn Tuckham, and it was amusing to find an exuberant Tory in one who was the reverse of the cavalier type. Nevil and he seemed to have been sorted to the wrong sides. Mr. Tuckham had a round head, square flat forehead, and ruddy face; he stood as if his feet claimed the earth under them

for his own, with a certain shortness of leg that detracted from the majesty of his resemblance to our Eighth Harry, but increased his air of solidity ; and he was authoritative in speaking. "Let me set you right, sir," he said sometimes to Colonel Halkett, and that was his modesty. "You are altogether wrong," Miss Halkett heard herself informed, which was his courtesy. He examined some of her water-colour drawings before sitting down to dinner, approved of them, but thought it necessary to lay a broad finger on them to show their defects. On the question of politics, "I venture to state," he remarked, in anything but the tone of a venture, "that no educated man of ordinary sense who has visited our colonies will come back a Liberal." As for a man of sense and education being a Radical, he scouted the notion with a pooh sufficient to awaken a vessel in the doldrums. He said carelessly of Commander Beauchamp, that he might think himself one. Either the Radical candidate for Bevisham stood self-deceived, or—the other supposition. Mr. Tuckham would venture to state that no English gentleman, exempt from an examination by order of the Commissioners of Lunacy, could be sincerely a Radical. "Not a bit of it ; nonsense," he replied to Miss Halkett's hint at the

existence of Radical views; "that is, those views are out of politics; they are matters for the police. Dutch dykes are built to shut away the sea from cultivated land, and of course it's a part of the business of the Dutch Government to keep up the dykes, and of ours to guard against the mob; but that is only a political consideration after the mob has been allowed to undermine our defences."

"They speak," said Miss Halkett, "of educating the people to fit them——"

"They speak of commanding the winds and tides," he cut her short, with no clear analogy; "wait till we have a storm. It's a delusion amounting to dementedness to suppose that, with the people inside our defences, we can be taming them and tricking them. As for sending them to school after giving them power, it's like asking a wild beast to sit down to dinner with us—he wants the whole table and us too. The best education for the people is government. They're beginning to see that in Lancashire at last. I ran down to Lancashire for a couple of days on my landing, and I'm thankful to say Lancashire is preparing to take a step back. Lancashire leads the country. Lancashire men see what this Liberalism has done for the Labour-market."

“Captain Beauchamp considers that the political change coming over the minds of the manufacturers is due to the large fortunes they have made,” said Miss Halkett, maliciously associating a Radical prophet with him.

He was unaffected by it, and continued: “Property is ballast as well as treasure. I call property funded good sense. I would give it every privilege. If we are to speak of patriotism, I say the possession of property guarantees it. I maintain that the lead of men of property is in most cases sure to be the safe one.”

“*I think so,*” Colonel Halkett interposed, and he spoke as a man of property.

Mr. Tuckham grew fervent in his allusions to our wealth and our commerce. Having won the race and gained the prize, shall we let it slip out of our grasp? Upon this topic his voice descended to tones of priestlike awe: for are we not the envy of the world? Our wealth is countless, fabulous. It may well inspire veneration. And we have won it with our hands, thanks (he implied it so) to our religion. We are rich in money and industry, in those two things only, and the corruption of an energetic industry is constantly threatened by the profusion of wealth giving it employment. This being the

case, either your Radicals do not know the first conditions of human nature, or they do; and if they do they are traitors, and the Liberals opening the gates to them are fools: and some are knaves. We perish as a Great Power if we cease to look sharp ahead, hold firm together, and make the utmost of what we possess. The word for the performance of those duties is Toryism: a word with an older flavour than Conservatism, and Mr. Tuckham preferred it. By all means let workmen be free men: but a man must earn his freedom daily, or he will become a slave in some form or another: and the way to earn it is by work and obedience to right direction. In a country like ours, open on all sides to the competition of intelligence and strength, with a Press that is the voice of all parties and of every interest; in a country offering to your investments three and a half and more per cent., secure as the firmament!—

He perceived an amazed expression on Miss Halkett's countenance; and "Ay," said he, "that means the certainty of food to millions of mouths, and comforts, if not luxuries, to half the population. A safe percentage on savings is the basis of civilisation."

But he had bruised his eloquence, for though you

may start a sermon from stones to hit the stars, he must be a practised orator who shall descend out of the abstract to take up a heavy lump of the concrete without unseating himself, and he stammered and came to a flat ending:—"In such a country—well, I venture to say, we have a right to condemn in advance disturbers of the peace, and they must show very good cause indeed for not being summarily held to account for their conduct."

The allocution was not delivered in the presence of an audience other than sympathetic, and Miss Halkett rightly guessed that it was intended to strike Captain Beauchamp by ricochet. He puffed at the mention of Beauchamp's name. He had read a reported speech or two of Beauchamp's, and shook his head over a quotation of the stuff, as though he would have sprung at him like a lion, but for his enrolment as a constable.

Not a whit the less did Mr. Tuckham drink his claret relishingly, and he told stories incidental to his travels now and then, commended the fishing here, the shooting there, and in some few places the cookery, with much bright emphasis when it could be praised; it appeared to be an endearing recollection to him. Still, as a man of progress he declared his belief that we English would ultimately

turn out the best cooks, having indubitably the best material. "Our incomprehensible political pusillanimity" was the one sad point about us: we had been driven from surrender to surrender.

"Like geese upon a common, I have heard it said," Miss Halkett assisted him to Dr. Shrapnel's comparison.

Mr. Tuckham laughed, and half yawned and sighed, "Dear me!"

His laughter was catching, and somehow more persuasive of the soundness of the man's heart and head than his remarks.

She would have been astonished to know that a gentleman so uncourtly, if not uncouth—judged by the standard of the circle she moved in—and so unskilled in pleasing the sight and hearing of ladies as to treat them like junior comrades, had raised the vow within himself on seeing her: You, or no woman!

The colonel delighted in him, both as a strong and able young fellow, and a refreshingly aggressive recruit of his party, who was for onslaught, and invoked common sense, instead of waving the flag of sentiment in retreat; a very horse-artilleryman of Tories. Regretting immensely that Mr. Tuckham had not reached England earlier, that he might

have occupied the seat for Bevisham, about to be given to Captain Baskelett, Colonel Halkett set up a contrast of Blackburn Tuckham, and Nevil Beauchamp : a singular instance of unfairness, his daughter thought, considering that the distinct contrast presented by the circumstances was that of Mr. Tuckham and Captain Baskelett.

"It seems to me, papa, that you are contrasting the idealist and the realist," she said.

"Ah well, we don't want the idealist in politics," muttered the colonel.

Latterly he also had taken to shaking his head over Nevil : Cecilia dared not ask him why.

Mr. Tuckham arrived at Mount Laurels on the eve of the Nomination day in Bevisham. An article in the Bevisham Gazette calling upon all true Liberals to demonstrate their unanimity by a multitudinous show of hands, he ascribed to the writing of a child of Erin ; and he was highly diverted by the Liberal's hiring of Paddy to "pen and spout" for him. "A Scotchman manages, and Paddy does the sermon for *all* their journals," he said off-hand ; adding : "And the English are the compositors, I suppose." You may take that for an instance of the national spirit of Liberal newspapers ! "Ah !" sighed the colonel, as at a case

clearly demonstrated against them. A drive down to Bevisham to witness the ceremony of the nomination in the townhall sobered Mr. Tuckham's disposition to generalise. Beauchamp had the show of hands, and to say with Captain Baskellett, that they were a dirty majority, was beneath Mr. Tuckham's verbal antagonism. He fell into a studious reserve, noting everything, listening to everybody, greatly to Colonel Halkett's admiration of one by nature a talker and a thunderer.

The show of hands Mr. Seymour Austin declared to be the most delusive of electoral auspices; and it proved so. A little later than four o'clock in the afternoon of the election-day, Cecilia received a message from her father telling her that both of the Liberals were headed; 'Beauchamp nowhere.'

Mrs. Grancey Lespel was the next herald of Beauchamp's defeat. She merely stated the fact that she had met the colonel and Mr. Blackburn Tuckham driving on the outskirts of the town, and had promised to bring Cecilia the final numbers of the poll. Without naming them, she unrolled the greater business in her mind.

"A man who in the middle of an election goes over to France to fight a duel, can hardly expect

to win; he has all the morality of an English borough opposed to him," she said; and seeing the young lady stiffen: "Oh! the duel is positive," she dropped her voice. "With the husband. Who else could it be? And returns invalided. That is evidence. My nephew Palmet has it from Vivian Ducie, and he is acquainted with her tolerably intimately, and the story is, she was overtaken in her flight in the night, and the duel followed at eight o'clock in the morning; but her brother insisted on fighting for Captain Beauchamp, and I cannot tell you how—but *his* place in it I can't explain—there was a beau jeune homme, and it's quite possible that *he* should have been the person to stand up against the marquis. At any rate, he insulted Captain Beauchamp, or thought your hero had insulted him, and the duel was with one or the other. It matters exceedingly little with whom, if a duel was fought, and you see we have quite established that."

"I hope it is not true," said Cecilia.

"My dear, that is the Christian thing to do," said Mrs. Lespel. "Duelling is horrible: though those Romfreys!—and the Beauchamps were just as bad, or nearly. Colonel Richard fought for a friend's wife or sister. But in these days duelling is incre-

dible. It was an inhuman practice always, and it is now worse—it is a breach of manners. I would hope it is not true; and you may mean that I have it from Lord Palmet. But I know Vivian Ducie as well as I know my nephew, and if he distinctly mentions an occurrence, we may too surely rely on the truth of it; he is not a man to spread mischief. Are you unaware that he met Captain Beauchamp at the château of the marquise? The whole story was acted under his eyes. He had only to take up his pen. Generally he favours me with his French gossip. I suppose there were circumstances in this affair more suitable to Palmet than to me. He wrote a description of Madame de Rouaillout that set Palmet strutting about for an hour. I have no doubt she must be a very beautiful woman, for a Frenchwoman: not regular features; expressive, capricious. Vivian Ducie lays great stress on her eyes and eyebrows, and, I think, her hair. With a Frenchwoman's figure, that is enough to make men crazy. He says her husband deserves—but what will not young men write? It is deeply to be regretted that Englishmen abroad—women the same, I fear—get the Continental tone in morals. But how Captain Beauchamp could expect to carry on an election and an intrigue together, only a

head like his can tell us. Grancey is in high indignation with him. It does not concern the election, you can imagine. Something that man Dr. Shrapnel has done, which he says Captain Beauchamp could have prevented. Quarrels of men ! I have instructed Palmet to write to Vivian Ducie for a photograph of Madame de Rouaillout. Do you know, one has a curiosity to see the face of the woman for whom a man ruins himself. But I say again, he ought to be married."

"That there may be two victims?" Cecilia said it smiling.

She was young in suffering, and thought, as the unseasoned and inexperienced do, that a mask is a concealment.

"Married — settled ; to have him bound in honour," said Mrs. Lespel. "I had a conversation with him when he was at Itchincope ; and his look, and what I know of his father, that gallant and handsome Colonel Richard Beauchamp, would give one a kind of confidence in him ; supposing always that he is not struck with one of those deadly passions that are like snakes, like magic. I positively believe in them. I have seen them. And if they end, they end as if the man were burnt out, and was ashes inside ; as you see Mr. Stukely

Culbrett, all cynicism. You would not now suspect him of a passion! It is true. Oh, I know it! That is what the men go to. The women die. Vera Winter died at twenty-three. Caroline Ormond was hardly older. You know her story; everybody knows it. The most singular and convincing case was that of Lord Alfred Burnley and Lady Susan Gardiner, wife of the general; and there was an instance of two similarly afflicted—a very rare case, most rare: they never could meet to part! It was almost ludicrous. It is now quite certain that they did not conspire to meet. At last the absolute fatality became so well understood by the persons immediately interested— You laugh?"

"Do I laugh?" said Cecilia.

"We should all know the world, my dear, and you are a strong head. The knowledge is only dangerous for fools. And if romance is occasionally ridiculous, as I own it can be, humdrum, I protest, is everlastingly so. By-the-by, I should have told you that Captain Beauchamp was one hundred and ninety below Captain Baskelett when the state of the poll was handed to me. The gentleman driving with your father compared the Liberals to a parachute cut away from the balloon. Is he army or navy?"

“He is a barrister, and some cousin of Captain Beauchamp.”

“I should not have taken him for a Beauchamp,” said Mrs. Lespel ; and, resuming her worldly sagacity, “I should not like to be in opposition to that young man.”

She seemed to have a fancy unexpressed regarding Mr. Tuckham. Reminding herself that she might be behind time at Itchincope, where the guests would be numerous that evening, and the song of triumph loud, with Captain Baskellett to lead it, she kissed the young lady she had unintentionally been torturing so long, and drove away.

Cecilia hoped it was not true. Her heart sank heavily under the belief that it was. She imagined the world abusing Nevil and casting him out, as those electors of Bevisham had just done, and impulsively she pleaded for him, and became drowned in criminal blushes that forced her to defend herself with a determination not to believe the dreadful story, though she continued mitigating the wickedness of it ; as if, by a singular inversion of the fact, her clear good sense excused, and it was her heart that condemned him. She dwelt fondly on an image of the ‘gallant and handsome Colonel Richard Beauchamp,’ conjured up in her mind from

the fervour of Mrs. Lespel when speaking of Nevil's father, whose chivalry threw a light on the son's, and whose errors, condoned by time, and with a certain brilliancy playing above them, interceded strangely on behalf of Nevil.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SHORT SIDELOOK AT THE ELECTION.

THE brisk election-day, unlike that wearisome but instructive canvass of the Englishman in his castle vicatim, teaches little; and its humours are those of a badly-managed Christmas pantomime without a columbine—old tricks, no graces. Nevertheless, things hang together so that it cannot be passed over with a bare statement of the fact of the Liberal-Radical defeat in Bevisham: the day was not without fruit in time to come for him whom his commiserating admirers of the non-voting sex all round the borough called the poor dear commander. Beauchamp's holiday out of England had incited Dr. Shrapnel to break a positive restriction put upon him by Jenny Denham, and actively pursue the canvass and the harangue in person; by which conduct, as Jenny had foreseen, many temperate electors were alienated from Commander

Beauchamp, though no doubt the Radicals were made compact: for they may be the skirmishing faction—poor scattered fragments, none of them sufficiently downright for the other; each outstripping each; rudimentary emperors, elementary prophets, inspired physicians, nostrum-devouring patients, whatsoever you will; and still here and there a man shall arise to march them in close columns, if they can but trust him; in perfect subordination, a model even for Tories while they keep shoulder to shoulder. And to behold such a disciplined body is intoxicating to the eye of a leader accustomed to count ahead upon vapourish abstractions, and therefore predisposed to add a couple of noughts to every tangible figure in his grasp. Thus will a realised fifty become five hundred or five thousand to him: the very sense of number is instinct with multiplication in his mind; and those years far on in advance, which he has been looking to with some fatigue to the optics, will suddenly and rollickingly roll up to him at the shutting of his eyes in a temporary fit of gratification. So, by looking and by not looking, he achieves his phantom victory—embraces his cloud. Dr. Shrapnel conceived that the day was to be a Radical success; and he, a citizen aged and exercised in reverses, so rounded

by the habit of them indeed as to tumble and recover himself on the wind of the blow that struck him, was, it must be acknowledged, staggered and cast down when he saw Beauchamp drop, knowing full well his regiment had polled to a man. Radicals poll early; they would poll at cockcrow if they might; they dance on the morning. As for their chagrin at noon, you will find descriptions of it in the poet's *Inferno*. They are for lifting our clay soil on a lever of Archimedes, and are not great mathematicians. They have perchance a foot of our earth, and perpetually do they seem to be producing an effect, perpetually does the whole land roll back on them. You have not surely to be reminded that it hurts them; the weight is immense. Dr. Shrapnel, however, speedily looked out again on his vast horizon, though prostrate. He regained his height of stature with no man's help. Success was but postponed for a generation or two. Is it so very distant? Gaze on it with the eye of our parent orb! "I shall not see it here; you may," he said to Jenny Denham; and he fortified his outlook by saying to Mr. Lydiard that the Tories of our time walked, or rather stuck, in the track of the Radicals of a generation back. Note, then, that Radicals, always marching to the triumph,

never taste it; and for Tories it is Dead Sea fruit, ashes in their mouths! Those Liberals, those temporisers, compromisers, a concourse of atoms! glorify themselves in the animal satisfaction of sucking the juice of the fruit, for which they pay with their souls. They have no true cohesion, for they have no vital principle.

Mr. Lydiard being a Liberal, bade the doctor not to forget the work of the Liberals, who touched on Tory and Radical with a pretty steady swing, from *sîdè* to side, in the manner of the pendulum of a clock, which is the clock's life, remember that. The Liberals are the professors of the practicable in politics.

"A suitable image for timeservers!" Dr. Shrapnel exclaimed, intolerant of any mention of the Liberals as a party, especially in the hour of Radical discomfiture, when the fact that compromisers should exist exasperates men of a principle. "Your Liberals are the band of Pyrrhus, an army of bastards, mercenaries professing the practicable for pay! They know us the motive force, the Tories the resisting power, and they feign to aid us in battering our enemy, that they may stop the shock. We fight, they profit. What are they? Stranded Whigs, crotchetty manufacturers; dissentient reli-

gionists; the half-minded, the hare-hearted; the I would and I would not—shifty creatures, with youth's enthusiasm decaying in them, and a purse beginning to jingle; fearing lest we do too much for safety, our enemy not enough for safety. They a party? Let them take action and see! *We* stand a thousand defeats; they not one! Compromise begat them. Once let them leave sucking the teats of compromise, yea, once put on the air of men who fight and die for a cause, they fly to pieces. And whither the fragments? Chiefly, my friend, into the *Tory* ranks. Seriously so I say. You between future and past are for the present—but with the hunted look behind of all godless livers in the present. You Liberals are Tories with foresight, Radicals without faith. You start, in fear of Toryism, on an errand of Radicalism, and in fear of Radicalism to Toryism you draw back. There is your pendulum-swing!"

Lectures to this effect were delivered by Dr. Shrapnel throughout the day, for his private spiritual solace it may be supposed, unto Lydiard, Turbot, Beauchamp, or whomsoever the man chancing to be near him, and never did Sir Oracle wear so extraordinary a garb. The favourite missiles of the day were flourbags. Dr. Shrapnel's

uncommon height, and his outrageous long brown coat, would have been sufficient to attract them, without the reputation he had for desiring to subvert everything old English. The first discharges gave him the appearance of a thawing snow-man. Drenchings of water turned the flour to ribs of paste, and in colour at least he looked legitimately the cook's own spitted hare, escaped from her basting ladle, elongated on two legs. It ensued that whenever he was caught sight of, as he walked unconcernedly about, the young street-professors of the decorative arts were seized with a frenzy to add their share to the whitening of him, until he might have been taken for a miller that had gone bodily through his meal. The popular cry proclaimed him a ghost, and he walked like one, impassive, blanched, and silent amid the uproar of mobs of jolly ruffians, for each of whom it was a point of honour to have a shy at old Shrapnel. Clad in this preparation of piecrust, he called from time to time at Beauchamp's hotel, and renewed his monologue upon that Radical empire in the future which was for ever in the future for the pioneers of men, yet not the less their empire. "Do we live in our bodies?" quoth he, replying to his fiery interrogation: "Ay, the Tories! the Liberals!" *They* lived

in their bodies. Not one syllable of personal consolation did he vouchsafe to Beauchamp. He did not imagine it could be required by a man who had bathed in the pure springs of Radicalism ; and it should be remarked that Beauchamp deceived him by imitating his air of happy abstraction, or subordination of the faculties to a distant view, comparable to a ship's crew in difficulties receiving the report of the man at the masthead. Beauchamp deceived Miss Denham too, and himself, by saying, as if he cherished the philosophy of defeat, besides the resolution to fight on :

“It's only a skirmish lost, and that counts for nothing in a battle without end : it must be incessant.”

“But does incessant battling keep the intellect clear ?” was her memorable answer.

He glanced at Lydiard, to indicate that it came of that gentleman's influence upon her mind. It was impossible for him to think that women thought. The idea of a pretty woman exercising her mind independently, and moreover moving him to examine his own, made him smile. Could a sweet-faced girl, the nearest to Renée in grace of manner and in feature of all women known to him, originate a sentence that would set him reflecting ?

He was unable to forget it, though he allowed her no credit for it.

On the other hand, his admiration of her devotedness to Dr. Shrapnel was unbounded. There shone a strictly feminine quality! according to the romantic visions of the sex entertained by Commander Beauchamp, and by others who would be the objects of it. But not alone the passive virtues were exhibited by Jenny Denham: she proved that she had high courage. No remonstrance could restrain Dr. Shrapnel from going out to watch the struggle, and she went with him as a matter of course on each occasion. Her dress bore witness to her running the gauntlet beside him.

"It was not thrown at me purposely," she said, to quiet Beauchamp's wrath. She saved the doctor from being roughly mobbed. Once when they were surrounded she fastened his arm under hers, and by simply moving on with an unswerving air of serenity obtained a passage for him. So much did she make herself respected, that the gallant rascals became emulous in dexterity to avoid powdering her, by loudly execrating any but dead shots at the detested one, and certain boys were maltreated for an ardour involving clumsiness. A young genius of this horde conceiving, in the spirit of the inventors

of our improved modern ordnance, that it was vain to cast missiles which left a thing standing, hurled a stone wrapped in paper. It missed its mark. Jenny said nothing about it. The day closed with a comfortable fight or two in by-quarters of the town, probably to prove that an undaunted English spirit, spite of fickle Fortune, survived in our muscles.

CHAPTER IX.

TOUCHING A YOUNG LADY'S HEART AND HER INTELLECT.

MR. TUCKHAM found his way to Dr. Shrapnel's cottage to see his kinsman on the day after the election. There was a dinner in honour of the members for Bevisham at Mount Laurels in the evening, and he was five minutes behind military time when he entered the restive drawing-room and stood before the colonel. No sooner had he stated that he had been under the roof of Dr. Shrapnel, than his unpunctuality was immediately overlooked in the burst of impatience evoked by the name.

“That pestilent fellow!” Colonel Halkett ejaculated. “I understand he has had the impudence to serve a notice on Grancey Lespel about encroachments on common land.”

Some one described Dr. Shrapnel's appearance under the flour-storm.

"He deserves anything," said the colonel, consulting his mantelpiece clock.

Captain Baskellett observed : "I shall have my account to settle with Dr. Shrapnel." He spoke like a man having a right to be indignant, but, excepting that the doctor had bestowed nicknames upon him in a speech at a meeting, no one could discover the grounds for it. He nodded briefly. A Radical apple had struck him on the left cheek-bone as he performed his triumphal drive through the town, and a slight disfigurement remained, to which his hand was applied sympathetically at intervals, for the cheek-bone was prominent in his countenance, and did not well bear enlargement. And when a fortunate gentleman, desiring to be still more fortunate, would display the winning amiability of his character, distension of one cheek gives him an afflictingly false look of sweetness.

The bent of his mind, nevertheless, was to please Miss Halkett. He would be smiling, and intimately smiling. Aware that she had a kind of pitiful sentiment for Nevil, he smiled over Nevil—poor Nevil ! "I give you my word, Miss Halkett, old Nevil was off his head yesterday. I dare say he meant to be civil. I met him ; I called out to him, ' Good day, cousin, I'm afraid you're beaten : ' and says he,

‘I fancy you’ve gained it, *uncle*.’ He didn’t know where he was; all abroad, poor boy. Uncle!—to me!”

Miss Halkett would have accepted the instance for a proof of Nevil’s distraction, had not Mr. Seymour Austin, who sat beside her, laughed and said to her: “I suppose ‘uncle’ was a chance shot, but it’s equal to a poetic epithet in the light it casts on the story.” Then it seemed to her that Nevil had been keenly quick, and Captain Baskett’s impenetrability was a sign of his density. Her mood was to think Nevil Beauchamp only too quick, too adventurous and reckless: one that wrecked brilliant gifts in a too general warfare; a lover of hazards, a hater of laws. Her eyes flew over Captain Baskett as she imagined Nevil addressing him as uncle, and, to put aside a spirit of mockery rising within her, she hinted a wish to hear Seymour Austin’s opinion of Mr. Tuckham. He condensed it in an interrogative tone: “The *other* extreme?” The Tory extreme of Radical Nevil Beauchamp. She assented. Mr. Tuckham was at that moment prophesying the Torification of mankind; not as the trembling venturesome idea which we cast on doubtful winds, but as a ship is launched to ride the waters, with huzzas for a thing accomplished.

Mr. Austin raised his shoulders imperceptibly, saying to Miss Halkett: "The turn will come to us as to others—and go. Nothing earthly can escape *that* revolution. We have to meet it with a policy, and let it pass with measures carried and our hands washed of some of our party sins. I am, I hope, true to my party, but the enthusiasm of party I do not share. He is right, however, when he accuses the nation of cowardice for the last ten years. One third of the Liberals have been with us at heart, and dared not speak, and we dared not say what we wished. We accepted a compact that satisfied us both—satisfied *us* better than when we were opposed by Whigs—that is, the Liberal reigned, and we governed: and I should add, a very clever juggler was our common chief. Now we have the consequences of hollow peacemaking, in a suffrage that bids fair to extend to the wearing of hats and boots for a qualification. The moral of it seems to be that cowardice is even worse for nations than for individual men, though the consequences come on us more slowly."

"You spoke of party sins," Miss Halkett said incredulously.

"I shall think we are the redoubtable party when we admit the charge."

“Are you alluding to the landowners?”

“Like the land itself, they have rich veins in heavy matter. For instance, the increasing wealth of the country is largely recruiting our ranks; and we shall be tempted to mistake numbers for strength, and perhaps again be reading Conservatism for a special thing of our own—a fortification. That would be a party sin. Conservatism is a principle of government; the best because the safest for an old country; and the guarantee that we do not lose the wisdom of past experience in our struggle with what is doubtful. Liberalism stakes too much on the chance of gain. It is uncomfortably seated on half-a-dozen horses; and it has to feed them too, and on varieties of corn.”

“Yes,” Miss Halkett said, pausing, “and I know you would not talk down to me, but the use of innuendo makes me feel that I am addressed as a primitive intelligence.”

“That’s the fault of my trying at condensation, as the hieroglyphists put an animal for a paragraph. I am incorrigible, you see; but the lecture in prose must be for by-and-by, if you care to have it.”

“If you care to read it to me. Did a single hieroglyphic figure stand for so much?”

"I have never deciphered one."

"You have been speaking to me too long in earnest, Mr. Austin!"

"I accept the admonition, though it is wider than the truth. Have you ever consented to listen to politics before?"

Cecilia reddened faintly, thinking of him who had taught her to listen, and of her previous contempt of the subject.

A political exposition devoid of imagery was given to her next day on the sunny south-western terrace of Mount Laurels, when it was only by mentally translating it into imagery that she could advance a step beside her intellectual guide; and she was ashamed of the volatility of her ideas. She was constantly comparing Mr. Austin and Nevil Beauchamp, seeing that the senior and the junior both talked to her with the familiar recognition of her understanding which was a compliment without the gross corporeal phrase. But now she made another discovery, that should have been infinitely more of a compliment, and it was bewildering, if not repulsive to her:—could it be credited? Mr. Austin was a firm believer in new and higher destinies for women. He went farther than she could concede the right of human speculation to go; he

was, in fact, as radical there as Nevil Beauchamp politically; and would not the latter innovator stare, perchance frown conservatively, at a prospect of woman taking counsel, *in council*, with men upon public affairs, like the women in the Germania! Mr. Austin, if this time he talked in earnest, deemed that Englishwomen were on the road to win such a promotion, and would win it ultimately. He said soberly that he saw more certain indications of the reality of progress among women than any at present shown by men. And he was professedly temperate. He was but for opening avenues to the means of livelihood for them, and leaving it to their strength to conquer the position they might wish to win. His belief that they would do so was the revolutionary sign.

“Are there points of likeness between Radicals and Tories?” she inquired.

“I suspect a cousinship in extremes,” he answered.

“If one might be present at an argument!” said she.

“We have only to meet to fly apart as wide as the Poles,” Mr. Austin rejoined.

But she had not spoken of a particular person to meet him; and how, then, had she betrayed her-

self? She fancied he looked unwontedly arch as he resumed :

“The end of the argument would see us each entrenched in his party. Suppose me to be telling your Radical friend such truisms as that we English have not grown in a day, and were not originally made free and equal by decree; that we have grown, and must continue to grow, by the aid and the development of our strength; that ours is a fairly legible history, and a fair example of the good and the bad in human growth; that his land-owner and his peasant have no clear case of right and wrong to divide them, one being the descendant of strong men, the other of weak ones; and that the former may sink, the latter may rise—there is no artificial obstruction; and if it is difficult to rise, it is easy to sink. Your Radical friend, who would bring them to a level by proclamation, could not adopt a surer method for destroying the manhood of a people: he is for doctoring wooden men, and I for not letting our stout English be cut down short as Laplanders; he would have them in a forcing-house, and I in open air, as hitherto. Do you perceive a discussion? and you apprehend the nature of it. We have nerves. That is why it is better for men of extremely opposite opinions not to

meet. I dare say Radicalism has a function, and so long as it respects the laws I am ready to encounter it where it cannot be avoided. Pardon my prosing."

"Recommend me some hard books to study through the winter," said Cecilia, refreshed by a discourse that touched no emotions, as by a febrifuge. Could Nevil reply to it? She fancied him replying, with that wild head of his—wildest of natures. She fancied also that her wish was like Mr. Austin's, not to meet him. She was enjoying a little rest.

It was not quite generous in Mr. Austin to assume that 'her Radical friend' had been prompting her. However, she thanked him in her heart for the calm he had given her. To be able to imagine Nevil Beauchamp intellectually erratic was a tonic satisfaction to the proud young lady, ashamed of a bondage that the bracing and pointing of her critical powers helped her to forget. She had always preferred the society of men of Mr. Austin's age. How old was he? Her father would know. And why was he unmarried? A light frost had settled on the hair about his temples; his forehead was lightly wrinkled; but his mouth and smile, and his eyes, were lively as a young man's, with more in

them. His age must be something less than fifty. O for peace! she sighed. When he stepped into his carriage, and stood up in it to wave adieu to her, she thought his face and figure a perfect example of an English gentleman in his prime.

Captain Baskelett requested the favour of five minutes of conversation with Miss Halkett before he followed Mr. Austin, on his way to Steynham.

She returned from that colloquy to her father and Mr. Tuckham. The colonel looked straight in her face, with an elevation of the brows. To these points of interrogation she answered with a placid fall of her eyelids. He sounded a note of approbation in his throat.

All the company having departed, Mr. Tuckham for the first time spoke of his interview with his kinsman Beauchamp. Yesterday evening he had slurred it, as if he had nothing to relate, except the finding of an old schoolfellow at Dr. Shrapnel's, named Lydiard, a man of ability fool enough to have turned author on no income. But that which had appeared to Miss Halkett a want of observancy, became attributable to depth of character on its being clear that he had waited for the departure of the transient guests of the house, to pour forth his impressions without holding up his kinsman to

public scorn. He considered Shrapnel mad and Beauchamp mad. No such grotesque old monster as Dr. Shrapnel had he seen in the course of his travels. He had never listened to a madman running loose who was at all up to Beauchamp. At a loss for words to paint him, he said: "Beauchamp seems to have a head like a firework manufactory, he's perfectly pyrocephalic." For an example of Dr. Shrapnel's talk: "I happened," said Mr. Tuckham, "casually, meaning no harm, and not supposing I was throwing a lighted match on powder, to mention the word Providence. I found myself immediately confronted by Shrapnel—overtopped, I should say. He is a lank giant of about seven feet in height; the kind of show man that used to go about in caravans over the country; and he began rocking over me like a poplar in a gale, and cries out: 'Stay there! away with that! Providence? Can you set a thought on Providence, not seeking to propitiate it? And have you not there the damning proof that you are at the foot of an Idol?'—The old idea about a special Providence, I suppose. These fellows have nothing new but their trimmings. And he went on with: 'Ay, invisible,' and his arm chopping, 'but an Idol! an Idol!'—I was to think of 'nought but Laws.' He admitted

there might be one above the Laws. 'To realise him is to fry the brains in their pan,' says he, and struck his forehead a slap: and off he walked down the garden, with his hands at his coat-tails. I venture to say it may be taken for a proof of incipient insanity to care to hear such a fellow twice. And Beauchamp holds him up for a sage and a prophet!"

"He is a very dangerous dog," said Colonel Halkett.

"The best of it is—and I take this for the strongest possible proof that Beauchamp is mad—Shrapnel stands for an *advocate of morality* against him. I'll speak of it"

Mr. Tuckham nodded to the colonel, who said: "Speak out. My daughter has been educated for a woman of the world."

"Well, sir, it's nothing to offend a young lady's ears. Beauchamp is for socially enfranchising the sex—that is all. Quite enough. Not a whit politically. Love is to be the test: and if a lady ceases to love her husband if she sets her fancy elsewhere, she's bound to leave him. The laws are tyrannical, our objections are cowardly. Well, this Dr. Shrapnel harangued about society; and men as well as women are to sacrifice their passions *on*

that altar. If he could burlesque himself it would be in coming out as a cleric—the old Pagan ! ”

“ Did he convince Captain Beauchamp ? ” the colonel asked, manifestly for his daughter to hear the reply ; which was : “ Oh dear, no ! ”

“ Were you able to gather from Captain Beauchamp's remarks whether he is much disappointed by the result of the election ? ” said Cecilia.

Mr. Tuckham could tell her only that Captain Beauchamp was incensed against an elector named Tomlinson for withdrawing a promised vote on account of lying rumours, and elated by the conquest of a Mr. Carpendike, who was reckoned a tough one to drag by the neck. “ The only sane people in the house are a Miss Denham and the cook : I lunched there,” Mr. Tuckham nodded approvingly. “ Lydiard must be mad. What he's wasting his time there for I can't guess. He says he's engaged there in writing a prefatory essay to a new publication of Harry Denham's poems—whoever that may be. And why writing it there ? I don't like it. He ought to be earning his bread. He'll be sure to be borrowing money by-and-by. We've got ten thousand too many fellows writing already, and they've seen a few inches of the world, on the Continent ! He can write. But it's

all unproductive—dead weight on the country, these fellows with their writings! He says Beauchamp's praise of Miss Denham is quite deserved. He tells me that, at great peril to herself—and she nearly had her arm broken by a stone—she saved Shrapnel from rough usage on the election-day."

"Hum!" Colonel Halkett grunted significantly.

"So I thought," Mr. Tuckham responded. "One doesn't want the man to be hurt, but he ought to be put down in some way. My belief is he's a Fire-worshipper. I warrant I would extinguish him if he came before me. He's an incendiary, at any rate."

"Do you think," said Cecilia, "that Captain Beauchamp is now satisfied with his experience of politics?"

"Dear me, no," said Mr. Tuckham. "It's the opening of a campaign. - He's off to the north, after he has been to Sussex and Bucks. He's to be at it all his life. One thing he shows common sense in. If I heard him once I heard him say half-a-dozen times, that he must have money:—'*I must have money!*' And so he must if he's to head the Radicals. He wants to start a newspaper! Is he likely to get money from his uncle Romfrey?"

"Not for his present plan of campaign." Colonel

Halkett enunciated the military word sarcastically.

"Let's hope he won't get money."

"He says he must have it."

"Who is to stand and deliver, then?"

"I don't know; I only repeat what he says: unless he has an eye on my Aunt Beauchamp; and I doubt his luck there, if he wants money for political campaigning."

"Money!" Colonel Halkett ejaculated.

That word too was in the heart of the heiress.

Nevil must have money! Could he have said it? Ordinary men might say or think it inoffensively; Captain Baskelett, for instance: but not Nevil Beauchamp.

Captain Baskelett, as she had conveyed the information to her father for his comfort in the dumb domestic language familiar between them on these occasions, had proposed to her unavailingly. Italian and English gentlemen were in the list of her rejected suitors: and hitherto she had seen them come and go, one might say, from a watchtower in the skies. None of them was the ideal she waited for: what their feelings were, their wishes, their aims, she had not reflected on. They dotted the landscape beneath the unassailable heights, busy after their fashion, somewhat quaint, much like

the pigmy husbandmen in the fields were to the giant's daughter, who had more curiosity than Cecilia. But Neyil Beauchamp had compelled her to quit her lofty station, pulled her low as the littlest of women that throb and flush at one man's footstep: and being well able to read the nature and aspirations of Captain Baskelett, it was with the knowledge of her having been proposed to as heiress of a great fortune that she chanced to hear of Nevil's resolve to have money. If he did say it! And was anything likelier? was anything unlikelier? His foreign love denied to him, why, now he devoted himself to money: money—the last consideration of a man so single-mindedly generous as he! But he must have money to pursue his contest! But would he forfeit the truth in him for money for any purpose?

The debate on this question grew as incessant as the thought of him.

Was it not to be supposed that the madness of the pursuit of his political chimera might change his character?

She hoped he would not come to Mount Laurels, thinking she should esteem him less if he did; knowing that her defence of him, on her own behalf, against herself, depended now on an esteem lodged

perhaps in her wilfulness. Yet if he did not come, what an Arctic world!

He came on a November afternoon when the woods glowed, and no sun. The day was narrowed in mist from earth to heaven: a moveless and possessing mist. It left space overhead for one wreath of high cloud mixed with touches of washed red upon moist blue, still as the mist, insensibly passing into it. Wet webs crossed the grass, chill in the feeble light. The last flowers of the garden bowed to decay. Dead leaves, red and brown, and spotted yellow, fell straight around the stems of trees, lying thick. The glow was universal, and the chill.

Cecilia sat sketching the scene at a window of her study, on the level of the drawing-room, and he stood by outside till she saw him. He greeted her through the glass, then went round to the hall door, giving her time to recover, if only her heart had been less shaken.

Their meeting was like the features of the day she set her brush to picture: characteristic of a season rather than cheerless in tone, though it breathed little cheer. Is there not a pleasure in contemplating that which is characteristic? Her unfinished sketch recalled him after he had gone: he lived in it, to startle her again, and bid her heart

gallop and her cheeks burn. The question occurred to her: May not one love, not craving to be beloved? Such a love does not sap our pride, but supports it; increases rather than diminishes our noble self-esteem. To attain such a love the martyrs writhed up to the crown of saints. For a while Cecilia revelled in the thought that she could love in this most saintlike manner. How they fled, the sordid ideas of him which accused him of the world's one passion, and were transferred to her own bosom in reproach that she should have imagined them existing in his! He talked simply and sweetly of his defeat, of time wasted away from the canvass, of loss of money: and he had little to spare, he said. The water-colour drawing interested him. He said he envied her that power of isolation, and the eye for beauty in every season. She opened a portfolio of Mr. Tuckham's water-colour drawings in every clime; scenes of Europe, Asia, and the Americas; and he was to be excused for not caring to look through them. His remark, that they seemed hard and dogged, was not so unjust, she thought, smiling to think of the critic criticized. His wonderment that a young man like his Lancastrian cousin should be 'an unmitigated Tory' was perhaps natural.

Cecilia said, "Yet I cannot discern in him a veneration for aristocracy."

"That's not wanted for modern Toryism," said Nevil. "One may venerate old families when they show the blood of the founder, and are not dead wood. I do. And I believe the blood of the founder, though the man may have been a savage and a robber, had in his day finer elements in it than were common. But let me say at a meeting that I respect true aristocracy, I hear a growl and a hiss beginning: why? Don't judge them hastily: because the people have seen the aristocracy opposed to the cause that was weak, and only submitting to it when it commanded them to resist at their peril; clinging to traditions, and not anywhere standing for humanity: much more a herd than the people themselves. Ah! well, we won't talk of it now. I say that is no aristocracy, if it does not head the people in virtue—military, political, national: I mean the qualities required by the times for leadership. I won't bother you with my ideas now. I love to see you paint-brush in hand."

Her brush trembled on the illumination of a scarlet maple. "In this country we were not originally made free and equal by decree, Nevil."

"No," said he, "and I cast no blame on our farthest ancestors."

It struck her that this might be an outline of a reply to Mr. Austin.

"So you have been thinking over it?" he asked.

"Not to conclusions," she said, trying to retain in her mind the evanescent suggestiveness of his previous remark, and vexed to find herself upon nothing but a devious phosphorescent trail there.

Her forehead betrayed the unwonted mental action. He cried out for pardon. "What right have I to bother you? I see it annoys you. The truth is, I came for peace. I think of you when they talk of English homes."

She felt then that he was comparing her home with another, a foreign home. After he had gone she felt that there had been a comparison of two persons. She remembered one of his observations: "Few women seem to have courage;" when his look at her was for an instant one of scrutiny or calculation. Under a look like that we perceive that we are being weighed. She had no clue to tell her what it signified.

Glorious and solely glorious love, that has risen above emotion, quite independent of craving! That is to be the bird of upper air, poised on his wings.

It is a home in the sky. Cecilia took possession of it systematically, not questioning whether it would last; like one who is too enamoured of the habitation to object to be a tenant-at-will. If it was cold, it was in recompense immeasurably lofty, a star-girdled place; and dwelling in it she could avow to herself the secret which was now working self-deception, and still preserve her pride unwounded. Her womanly pride, she would have said in vindication of it: but Cecilia Halkett's pride went far beyond the merely womanly.

Thus she was assisted to endure a journey down to Wales, where Nevil would surely not be. She passed a winter without seeing him. She returned to Mount Laurels from London at Easter, and went on a visit to Steynham, and back to London, having sight of him nowhere, still firm in the thought that she loved ethereally, to bless, forgive, direct, encourage, pray for him, impersonally. She read certain speeches delivered by Nevil at assemblies of Liberals or Radicals, which were reported in papers in the easy irony of the style of here and there a sentence, here and there a summary: salient quotations interspersed with running abstracts: a style terrible to friends of the speaker so reported, overwhelming if they differ in opinion: yet her charity was a

match for it. She was obliged to have recourse to charity, it should be observed. Her father drew her attention to the spectacle of R. C. S. Nevil Beauchamp, Commander R.N., fighting those reporters with letters in the newspapers, and the dry editorial comment flanked by three stars on the left. He was shocked to see a gentleman writing such letters to the papers. "But one thing hangs on another," said he.

"But you seem angry with Nevil, papa," said she.

"I do hate a turbulent, restless fellow, my dear," the colonel burst out.

"Papa, he has really been unfairly reported."

Cecilia laid three privately-printed full reports of Commander Beauchamp's speeches (very carefully corrected by him) before her father.

He suffered his eye to run down a page. "Is it possible you read this?—this trash!—dangerous folly, I call it."

Cecilia's reply, "In the interests of justice, I do," was meant to express her pure impartiality. By a toleration of what is detested we expose ourselves to the keenness of an adverse mind.

"Does he write to you, too?" said the colonel.

She answered: "Oh, no; I am not a politician."

"He seems to have expected you to read those tracts of his, though."

"Yes, I think he would convert me if he could," said Cecilia.

"Though you're not a politician."

"He relies on the views he delivers in public, rather than on writing to persuade; that was my meaning, papa."

"Very well," said the colonel, not caring to show his anxiety.

Mr. Tuckham dined with them frequently in London. This gentleman betrayed his accomplishments one by one. He sketched, and was no artist; he planted, and was no gardener; he touched the piano neatly, and was no musician; he sang, and he had no voice. Apparently he tried his hand at anything, for the privilege of speaking decisively upon all things. He accompanied the colonel and his daughter on a day's expedition to Mrs. Beauchamp, on the Upper Thames, and they agreed that he shone to great advantage in her society. Mrs. Beauchamp said she had seen her great-nephew Nevil, but without a comment on his conduct or his person; grave silence. Reflecting on it, Cecilia grew indignant at the thought that Mr. Tuckham might have been acting a sinister part. Mrs. Beau-

champ alluded to a newspaper article of her favourite great-nephew Blackburn, written, Cecilia knew through her father, to controvert some tremendous proposition of Nevil's. *That* was writing, Mrs. Beauchamp said. "I am not in the habit of fearing a conflict, so long as we have stout defenders. I rather like it," she said.

The colonel entertained Mrs. Beauchamp, while Mr. Tuckham led Miss Halkett over the garden. Cecilia considered that his remarks upon Nevil were insolent.

"Seriously, Miss Halkett, to take him at his best, he is a very good fellow, I don't doubt; I am told so; and a capital fellow among men, a good friend and not a bad boonfellow, and for that matter, the smoking-room is a better test than the drawing-room; all he wants is emphatically school—school—school. I have recommended the simple iteration of that one word in answer to him at his meetings, and the printing of it as a foot-note to his letters."

Cecilia's combative spirit precipitated her to say, "I hear the mob in it shouting Captain Beauchamp down."

"Ay," said Mr. Tuckham, "it would be setting the mob to shout wisely at last."

"The mob is a wild beast."

"Then we should hear wisdom coming out of the mouth of the wild beast."

"Men have the phrase, 'fair play.'"

"Fair play, I say, is not applicable to a man who deliberately goes about to stir the wild beast. He is laughed at, plucked, hustled, and robbed, by those who deafen him with their 'plaudits'—their roars. Did you see his advertisement of a great-coat, lost at some rapscaillon gathering down in the North, near my part of the country? A great-coat and a packet of letters. He offers a reward of £10. But that's honest robbery compared with the bleeding he'll get."

"Do you know Mr. Seymour Austin?" Miss Halkett asked him.

"I met him once at your father's table. Why?"

"I think you would like to listen to him."

"Yes, my fault is not listening enough," said Mr. Tuckham.

He was capable of receiving correction.

Her father told her he was indebted to Mr. Tuckham past payment in coin, for services rendered by him on a trying occasion among the miners in Wales during the first spring month. "I dare say he can speak effectively to miners," Cecilia said, outvying the contemptuous young man in super-

ciliousness, but with effort and not with satisfaction.

She left London in July, two days before her father could be induced to return to Mount Laurels. Feverish, and strangely subject to caprices now, she chose the longer way round by Sussex, and alighted at the station near Steynham to call on Mrs. Culling, whom she knew to be at the Hall, preparing it for Mr. Romfrey's occupation. In imitation of her father she was Rosamund's fast friend, though she had never quite realised her position, and did not thoroughly understand her. Would it not please her father to hear that she had chosen the tedious route for the purpose of visiting this lady, whose champion he was? So she went to Steynham, and for hours she heard talk of no one, of nothing, but her friend Nevil. Cecilia was on her guard against Rosamund's defence of his conduct in France. The declaration that there had been no misbehaviour at all could not be accepted; but the news of Mr. Romfrey's having installed Nevil in Holdesbury to manage that property, and of his having mooted to her father the question of an alliance between her and Nevil, was wonderful. Rosamund could not say what answer her father had made: hardly favourable, Cecilia supposed,

since he had not spoken of the circumstance to her. But Mr. Romfrey's influence with him would certainly be powerful. It was to be assumed, also, that Nevil had been consulted by his uncle. Rosamund said full-heartedly that this alliance had for years been her life's desire, and then she let the matter pass, nor did she once look at Cecilia searchingly, or seem to wish to probe her. Cecilia disagreed with Rosamund on an insignificant point in relation to something Mr. Romfrey and Captain Baskelett had done, and, as far as she could recollect subsequently, there was a packet of letters, or a pocket-book containing letters of Nevil's which he had lost, and which had been forwarded to Mr. Romfrey; for the pocket-book was originally his, and his address was printed inside. But among these letters was one from Dr. Shrapnel to Nevil: a letter so horrible that Rosamund frowned at the reminiscence of it, holding it to be too horrible for the quotation of a sentence. She owned she had forgotten any three consecutive words. Her known dislike of Captain Baskelett, however, was insufficient to make her see that it was unjustifiable in him to run about London reading it, with comments of the cruellest. Rosamund's greater detestation of Dr. Shrapnel blinded her to the offence

committed by the man she would otherwise have been very ready to scorn. So small did the circumstance appear to Cecilia, notwithstanding her gentle opposition at the time she listened to it, that she never thought of mentioning it to her father, and only remembered it when Captain Baskelett, with Lord Palmet in his company, presented himself at Mount Laurels, and proposed to the colonel to read to him "a letter from that scoundrelly old Shrapnel to Nevil Beauchamp, upon women, wives, thrones, republics, British loyalty, et cætera,"—an et cætera that rolled a series of tremendous reverberations down the list of all things held precious by freeborn Englishmen.

She would have prevented the reading. But the colonel would have it.

"Read on," said he. "Mr. Romfrey saw no harm."

Captain Baskelett held up Dr. Shrapnel's letter to Commander Beauchamp, at about half a yard's distance on the level of his chin, as a great-chested singer in a concert-room holds his music-scroll.

CHAPTER X.

THE EPISTLE OF DR. SHRAPNEL TO COMMANDER BEAUCHAMP.

BEFORE we give ear to the recital of Dr. Shrapnel's letter to his pupil in politics by the mouth of Captain Baskelett, it is necessary to defend this gentleman, as he would handsomely have defended himself, from the charge that he entertained ultimate designs in regard to the really abominable scrawl, which was like a child's drawing of ocean with here and there a sail capsized, and excited his disgust almost as much as did the contents his great indignation. He was prepared to read it, and stood blown out for the task, but it was temporarily too much for him. "My dear colonel, look at it, I entreat you," he said, handing the letter for exhibition, after fixing his eye-glass, and dropping it in repulsion. The common sentiment of mankind is offended by heterodoxy in mean attire; for there we

see the self-convicted villain—the criminal caught in the act; we try it and convict it by instinct without the ceremony of a jury: and so thoroughly aware of our promptitude in this respect has our arch-enemy become since his mediæval disgraces that his particular advice to his followers is now to scrupulously copy the world in externals; never to appear poorly clothed, nor to impart deceptive communications in bad handwriting. We can tell black from white, and our sagacity has taught him a lesson.

Colonel Halkett glanced at the detestable penmanship. Lord Palmet did the same, and cried, “Why, it’s worse than mine!”

Cecilia had protested against the reading of the letter, and she declined to look at the writing. She was entreated, adjured to look, in Captain Baskett’s peculiarly pursuing fashion; a ‘nay, but you shall,’ that she had been subjected to previously, and would have consented to run like a schoolgirl to escape from.

To resume the defence of him: he was a man incapable of forming plots, because his head would not hold them. He was an impulsive man, who could impale a character of either sex by narrating fables touching persons of whom he thought lightly.

and that being done he was devoid of malice, unless by chance his feelings or his interests were so aggrieved that his original haphazard impulse was bent to embrace new circumstances and be the parent of a line of successive impulses, in the main resembling an extremely far-sighted plot, whereat he gazed back with fondness, all the while protesting sincerely his perfect innocence of anything of the kind. Circumstances will often interwind with the moods of simply irritated men. In the present instance he could just perceive what might immediately come of his reading out of this atrocious epistle wherein Nevil Beauchamp was displayed the dangling puppet of a mountebank wire-puller, infidel, agitator, leveller, and scoundrel. Cognizant of Mr. Romfrey's overtures to Colonel Halkett, he traced them to that scheming woman in the house at Steynham, and he was of opinion that it was a friendly and good thing to do to let the old colonel and Cissy Halkett know Mr. Nevil through a bit of his correspondence. This, then, was a matter of business and duty that furnished an excuse for his going out of his way to call at Mount Laurels on the old familiar footing, so as not to alarm the heiress. A warrior accustomed to wear the burnished breastplates between London and

Windsor has, we know, more need to withstand than to discharge the shafts of amorous passion; he is indeed, as an object of beauty, notoriously compelled to be of the fair sex in his tactics, and must practise the arts and whims of nymphae to preserve himself: and no doubt it was the case with the famous Captain Baskelett, in whose mind sweet ladies held the place that the pensive politician gives to the masses, dreadful in their hatred, almost as dreadful in their affection. But an heiress is a distinct species among women; he hungered for the heiress; his elevation to Parliament made him regard her as both the ornament and the prop of his position; and it should be added that his pride, all the habits of thought of a conqueror of women, had been shocked by that stupefying rejection of him which Cecilia had intimated to her father with the mere lowering of her eyelids. Conceive the highest bidder at an auction hearing the article announce that it will not have *him*. Captain Baskelett talked of it everywhere for a month or so:—the girl could not know her own mind, for she suited him exactly! and he requested the world to partake of his astonishment. Chronicles of the season in London informed him that he was not the only fellow to whom the gates were shut. She could hardly be

thinking of Nevil? However, let the epistle be read. "Now for the Shrapnel shot," he nodded finally to Colonel Halkett, expanded his bosom, or natural cuirass, as before-mentioned, and was vocable above the common pitch:—

" 'MY BRAVE BEAUCHAMP,—On with your mission, and never a summing of results in hand, nor thirst for *prospects*, nor countings upon harvests; for seed sown in faith day by day is the nightly harvest of the soul, and with the soul we work. With the soul we see.' "

Captain Baskellett intervened: "Ahem! I beg to observe that this delectable rubbish is underlined by old Nevil's pencil." He promised to do a little roaring whenever it occurred, and continued with ghastly false accentuation, an intermittent sprightliness and depression of tone in the wrong places.

" 'The soul,' et cætera. Here we are! 'Desires to realise our gains are akin to the passion of usury; these are tricks of the usurer to grasp his gold in act and imagination. Have none of them. Work at the people!'—*At* them, remark!—'Moveless do they seem to you? Why, so is the earth to the sowing husbandman, and though we cannot forecast a reaping season, we have in history durable

testification that our seasons come in the souls of men, yea, as a planet that we have set in motion and faster and faster are we spinning it, and firmer and firmer shall we set it to regularity of revolution. *That means life!*—Shrapnel roars: you will have Nevil in a minute.—‘Recognise that now we have bare life; at best for the bulk of men the Saurian lizard’s broad back soaking and roasting in primeval slime; or say, in the so-called teachers of men, as much of life as pricks the frog in March to stir and yawn, and up on a flaccid leap that rolls him over some three inches nearer to the ditchwater besought by his instinct.’

“I ask you, did you ever hear? The flaccid frog! But on we go.”

“‘Professors, prophets, masters, each hitherto has had his creed and system to offer, good mayhap for the term; and each has put it forth for the truth everlasting, to drive the dagger to the heart of time, and put the axe to human growth!—that one circle of wisdom issuing of the experience and needs of their day, should act the despot over all other circles for ever!—so where at first light shone to light the yawning frog to his wet ditch, there, with the necessitated revolution of men’s minds in the course of ages, *darkness radiates.*’

“That’s old Nevil. Upon my honour, I haven’t a notion of what it all means, and I don’t believe the old rascal Shrapnel has himself. And pray be patient, my dear colonel. You will find him practical presently. I’ll skip, if you tell me to. Darkness radiates, does it !”

“‘The creed that rose in heaven sets below ; and where we had an angel we have claw-feet and fangs. Ask how that is ! The creed is much what it was when the followers diverged it from the Founder. But humanity is not *where* it was when that creed was food and guidance. Creeds will not die not fighting. We cannot root them up out of us without blood.’

“He threatens blood !—‘Ours, my Beauchamp, is the belief that humanity advances beyond the limits of creeds, is to be tied to none. We reverence the Master in his teachings ; we behold the limits of him in his creed—and that is not his work. We truly are his disciples, who see how far it was in him to do service ; not they that made of his creed a strait-jacket for humanity. So, in our prayers we dedicate the world to God, not calling him great for a title, no—showing him we know him great in a limitless world, lord of a truth we tend to, have not grasped. I say Prayer is good. I counsel it

to you again and again : in joy, in sickness of heart. The infidel will not pray ; the creed-slave prays to the image in his box.' ”

“ I’ve had enough ! ” Colonel Halkett ejaculated.

“ ‘ We,’ ” Captain Baskelett put out his hand for silence with an ineffable look of entreaty, for here was Shrapnel’s hypocrisy in full bloom : “ ‘ we make prayer a part of us, praying for no gifts, no interventions ; through the faith in prayer opening the soul to the undiscerned. And take this, my Beauchamp, for the good in prayer, that it makes us repose on the unknown with confidence, makes us flexible to change, makes us ready for revolution—for life, then ! He who has the fountain of prayer in him will not complain of hazards. Prayer is the recognition of laws ; the soul’s exercise and source of strength ; its thread of conjunction with them. Prayer for an object is the cajolery of an idol : the resource of superstition. There you misread it, Beauchamp. We that fight the living world must have the universal for succour of the truth in it. Cast forth the soul in prayer, you meet the effluence of the outer truth, you join with the creative elements giving breath to you ; and that crust of habit which is the soul’s tomb ; and custom, the soul’s tyrant ; and pride, our volcano-peak that

sinks us in a crater; and fear, which plucks the feathers from the wings of the soul and sits it naked and shivering in a vault, where the passing of a common hodman's foot above sounds like the king of terrors coming,—you are free of them, you live in the day and for the future, by this exercise and discipline of the soul's faith. Me it keeps young everlastingly, like the fountain of’”

“I say I cannot sit and hear any more of it!” exclaimed the colonel, chafing out of patience.

Lord Palmet said to Miss Halkett: “Isn't it like what we used to remember of a sermon?”

Cecilia waited for her father to break away, but Captain Baskelett had undertaken to skip, and was murmuring in sing-song some of the phrases that warned him off: “‘History—Bible of Humanity; Permanency—enthusiast's dream—despot's aim—clutch of dead men's fingers in live flesh Man animal; man angel; man rooted; man winged:’ Really, all this is too bad. Ah! here we are:—

“‘At them with outspeaking, Beauchamp!’ Here we are, colonel, and you will tell me whether you think it treasonable or not. At them, et cætera: ‘We have signed no convention to respect their’—he speaks of Englishmen, Colonel Halkett—‘their

passive idolatries ; a people with whom a mute conformity is as good as worship, but a word of dissent holds you up to execration ; and only for the freedom won in foregone days their hate would be active. *As we have them in their present stage,*—old Nevil's mark.—‘ *We are not parties to the tacit agreement to fill our mouths and shut our eyes. We speak because it is better they be roused to lapidate us than soused in their sty, with none to let them hear they live like swine, craving only not to be disturbed at the trough. The religion of this vast English middle-class ruling the land is Comfort. It is their central thought ; their idea of necessity ; their sole aim. Whatsoever ministers to Comfort, seems to belong to it, pretends to support it, they yield their passive worship to. Whatsoever alarms it they join to crush. There you get at their point of unity. They will pay for the security of Comfort, calling it national worship, or national defence, if too much money is not subtracted from the means of individual comfort ; if too much foresight is not demanded for the comfort of their brains. Have at them there. Speak. Moveless as you find them, they are not yet all gross clay, and I say again, the true word spoken has its chance of somewhere alighting and striking root. Look not*

to that. Seeds perish in nature ; good men fail. Look to the truth in you, and deliver it, with no afterthought of hope, for hope is dogged by dread ; we give our courage as hostage for the fulfilment of what we hope. Meditate on that transaction. Hope is for boys and girls, to whom nature is kind. For men to hope is to tremble. Let prayer—the soul's overflow, the heart's resignation—supplant it’

“Pardon, colonel ; I forgot to roar, but old Nevil marks all down that page for encomium,” said Captain Baskett. “Oh ! here we are. English loyalty is the subject. Now, pray attend to this, colonel. Shrapnel communicates to Beauchamp that if ten Beauchamps were spouting over the country without intermission he might condescend to hope. So on—to British loyalty. We are, so long as our sovereigns are well-conducted persons, and we cannot unseat them, observe ; he is eminently explicit, the old traitor !—we are to submit to the outward forms of respect, but we are frankly to say we are Republicans ; he has the impudence to swear that England is a Republican country, and calls our thoroughgoing loyalty—yours and mine, colonel—disloyalty. Hark : ‘Where kings lead, it is to be supposed they are wanted. Service is the noble office on earth, and where kings do service let

them take the first honours of the State: but'—hark at this—'the English middle-class, which has absorbed the upper and despises, when it is not quaking before it, the lower, will have nothing above it but a ricketty ornament like that you see on a confectioner's twelfth-cake.'"

"The man deserves hanging!" said Colonel Halkett.

"Further, my dear colonel, and Nevil marks it pretty much throughout: 'This loyalty smacks of a terrible perfidy. Pass the lords and squires; they are old trees, old foundations, or joined to them, whether old or new; they naturally apprehend dislocation when a wind blows, a river rises, or a man speaks; that comes of age or aping age: their hearts are in their holdings! For the loyalty of the rest of the land, it is the shopkeeper's loyalty, which is to be computed by the exact annual sum of his net profits. It is now at high tide. It will last with the prosperity of our commerce.'—The insolent old vagabond!—'Let commercial disasters come on us, and what of the loyalty now paying its hundreds of thousands, and howling down questioners! In a day of bankruptcies, how much would you bid for the loyalty of a class shivering under deprivation of luxuries, with its god Comfort

beggared ? Ay, my Beauchamp,'—the most offensive thing to me is that 'my Beauchamp,' but old Nevil has evidently given himself up hand and foot to this ruffian—'ay, when you reflect that fear of the so-called rabble, *i.e.* the people, the unmoneyed class, which knows not Comfort, tastes not of luxuries, is the main component of their noisy frigid loyalty, and that the people are not with them but against, and yet that the people might be won by visible forthright kingly service to a loyalty outdoing theirs as the sun the moon ; ay, that the people verily thirst to love and reverence ; and *that their love is the only love worth having*, because it is disinterested love, and endures, and takes heat in adversity,—reflect on it and wonder at the inversion of things ! So with a Church. It lives if it is at home with the poor. In the arms of enriched shopkeepers it rots, goes to decay in vestments—vestments ! flakes of mummy-wraps for it ! or else they use it for one of their political truncheons—to awe the ignorant masses : I quote them. So. Not much ahead of ancient Egyptians in spirituality or in priestcraft ! They call it statesmanship. O for a word for it ! Let Palsy and Cuning go to form a word. *Deadmanship*, I call it.'—To quote my uncle the baron, this is lunatic

dribble!—‘Parsons and princes are happy with the homage of this huge passive fleshpot class. It is enough for them. Why not? The taxes are paid and the tithes. Whilst commercial prosperity lasts!’ ”

Colonel Halkett threw his arms aloft.

“ ‘Meanwhile, note this: the people are the Power to come. Oppressed, unprotected, abandoned; left to the ebb and flow of the tides of the market, now taken on to work, now cast off to starve, committed to the shifting laws of demand and supply, slaves of Capital—the whited name for old accursed Mammon: and of all the ranked and black-uniformed host no pastor to come out of the association of shepherds, and proclaim before heaven and man the primary claim of their cause;—they are, I say, the power, worth the seduction of by another Power not mighty in England now: and likely in time to set up yet another Power not existing in England now. What if a passive comfortable clergy hand them over to men on the model of Irish pastors, who will succour, console, enfold, champion them? what if, when they have learnt to use their majority, sick of deceptions and the endless pulling of interests, they raise ONE representative to force the current of action with an

authority as little fictitious as their preponderance of numbers? The despot and the priest! There I see *our* danger, Beauchamp. You and I and some dozen labour to tie and knot them to manliness. We are few; they are many and weak. Rome offers them real comfort in return for their mites in coin, and—poor souls! mites in conscience, many of them. A Tyrant offers them to be directly their friend. Ask, Beauchamp, why they should not have comfort for pay as well as the big round—” Captain Baskelett stopped and laid the letter out for Colonel Halkett to read an unmentionable word, shamelessly marked by Nevil’s pencil—*‘belly-class!’* Ask, too, whether the comfort they wish for is not approaching divine compared with the stagnant fleshliness of that fat shopkeeper’s Comfort.

“Warn the people of this. Ay, warn the clergy. It is not only the poor that are caught by ranters. Endeavour to make those accommodating shepherds understand that they stand a chance of losing *rich* as well as poor! It should awaken them. The helpless poor and the uneasy rich are alike open to the seductions of Romish priests and intoxicated ranters. I say so it will be if that band of forty thousand go on slumbering and

nodding. They walk in a dream. The flesh is a dream. The soul only is life.'

"Now for you, colonel.

"'No extension of the army—no! A thousand times no. Let India go, then! Good for India that we hold India?' Ay, good: but not at such a cost as an extra tax, or compulsory service of our working man. If India is to be held for the good of India, throw open India to the civilized nations, that they help us in a task that overstrains us. At present India means utter perversion of the policy of England. Adrift India! rather than England red-coated. We dissent, Beauchamp! For by-and-by.'

"That is," Captain Baskelett explained, "by-and-by Shrapnel will have old Nevil fast enough."

"Is there more of it?" said Colonel Halkett, flapping his forehead for coolness.

"The impudence of this dog in presuming to talk about India!—eh, colonel? Only a paragraph or two more: I skip a lot. . . . Ah! here we are." Captain Baskelett read to himself and laughed in derision: "He calls our Constitution a compact unsigned by the larger number involved in it. What's this? 'A band of dealers in *fleshpottery*.' Do you detect a gleam of sense? He underscores

it. 'Interest fighting interest, none to direct, none to command, and the great interest of the country, the poor, left to sicken.' Then he comes to this:" Captain Baskett requested Colonel Halkett to read for himself: 'The stench of the trail of Ego in our History.'

The colonel perused it with an unsavoury expression of his features, and jumped up.

"Oddly, Mr. Romfrey thought this rather clever," said Captain Baskett, and read rapidly: "'Trace the course of Ego for them: first the king who conquers and can govern. In his egoism he dubs him holy; his family is of a selected blood; he makes the crown hereditary—Ego. Son by son the shame of egoism increases; valour abates; hereditary Crown, no hereditary qualities. The Barons rise. They in turn hold sway, and for their order—Ego. The traders overturn them: each class rides the classes under it while it can. It is ego—ego, the fountain cry, origin, sole source of war! Then death to ego, I say! If those traders had ruled for other than ego, power might have rested with them on broad basis enough to carry us forward for centuries. The workmen have ever been too anxious *to be ruled*. Now comes on the workman's era. Numbers win in

the end: proof of small wisdom in the world. Anyhow, with numbers there is rough nature's wisdom and justice. With numbers ego is interdependent and dispersed; it is universalised. Yet these may require correctives. If so, they will have it in a series of despots and revolutions that toss, mix, and bind the classes together: despots, revolutions; *panting alternations of the quickened heart of humanity:*' marked by our friend Nevil in notes of admiration."

"Mad as the writer," groaned Colonel Halkett. "Never in my life have I heard such stuff."

"Stay, colonel; here's Shrapnel defending Morality and Society," said Captain Baskelett.

Colonel Halkett vowed he was under no penal law to listen, and would not; but Captain Baskelett persuaded him: "Yes, here it is: I give you my word. Apparently old Nevil has been standing up for every man's right to run away with . . . Yes, really! I give you my word! and here we have Shrapnel insisting on respect for the marriage laws. Do hear this; here it is in black and white:— 'Society is our one tangible gain, our one roofing and flooring in a world of most uncertain structures built on morasses. Toward the laws that support it men hopeful of progress give their adhesion. If

it is martyrdom, what then? Let the martyrdom be. Contumacy is animalism. And attend to me,' says Shrapnel, 'the truer the love the readier for sacrifice! A thousand times yes. Rebellion against Society, and advocacy of Humanity, run counter. Tell me Society is the whited sepulchre, that it is blotched, hideous, hollow: and I say, add not another disfigurement to it; add to the purification of it. And you, if you answer, what can only one? I say that is the animal's answer, and applies also to politics, where the question, *what can one?* put in the relapsing tone, shows the country decaying in the individual. Society is the protection of the weaker, therefore a shield of women, who are our temple of civilization, to be kept sacred; and he that loves a woman will assuredly esteem and pity her sex, and not drag her down for another example of their frailty. Fight this out within you—!' But you are right, colonel; we have had sufficient. I shall be getting a democratic orator's twang, or a crazy parson's, if I go on much further. He covers thirty-two pages of letter-paper. The conclusion is:—'Jenny sends you her compliments, respects, and best wishes, and hopes she may see you before she goes to her friend Clara Sherwin and the general.'"

"Sherwin? Why, General Sherwin's a perfect gentleman," Colonel Halkett interjected; and Lord Palmet caught the other name: "Jenny? That's Miss Denham, Jenny Denham; an amazingly pretty girl: beautiful thick brown hair, real hazel eyes, and walks like a yacht before the wind."

"Perhaps, colonel, *Jenny* accounts for the defence of society," said Captain Baskett. "I have no doubt Shrapnel has a scheme for Jenny. The old communist and socialist!" He folded up the letter: "A curious composition, is it not, Miss Halkett?"

Cecilia was thinking that he tempted her to be the apologist of even such a letter.

"One likes to know the worst, and what's possible," said the colonel.

After Captain Baskett had gone, Colonel Halkett persisted in talking of the letter, and would have impressed on his daughter that the person to whom the letter was addressed must be partly responsible for the contents of it. Cecilia put on the argumentative air of a Court of Equity to discuss the point with him.

"Then you defend that letter?" he cried.

Oh, no: she did not defend the letter; she thought it wicked and senseless. "But," said

she, "the superior strength of men to women seems to me to come from their examining all subjects, shrinking from none. At least, I should not condemn Nevil on account of his correspondence."

"We shall see," said her father, sighing rather heavily. "I must have a talk with Mr. Romfrey, about that letter."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BAITING OF DR. SHRAPNEL.

CAPTAIN BASKELETT went down from Mount Laurels to Bevisham to arrange for the giving of a dinner to certain of his chief supporters in the borough, that they might know he was not obliged literally to sit in Parliament in order to pay a close attention to their affairs. He had not distinguished himself by a speech during the session, but he had stored a political precept or two in his memory, and, as he told Lord Palmet, he thought a dinner was due to his villains. "The way to manage your Englishman, Palmet, is to dine him." As the dinner would decidedly be dull, he insisted on having Lord Palmet's company. They crossed over to the yachting island, where portions of the letter of Commander Beauchamp's correspondent were read at the Club, under the verandah, and the

question put whether a man who held those opinions had a right to wear his uniform.

The letter was transmitted to Steynham in time to be consigned to the pocket-book before Beauchamp arrived there on one of his rare visits. Mr. Romfrey handed him the pocket-book with the frank declaration that he had read Shrapnel's letter. "All is fair in war, sir!" Beauchamp quoted him ambiguously.

The thieves had amused Mr. Romfrey by their scrupulous honesty in returning what was useless to them, while reserving the coat: but subsequently seeing the advertised reward, they had written to claim it; and, according to Rosamund Culling, he had been so tickled that he had deigned to reply to them, very briefly, but very comically.

Speaking of the matter with her, Beauchamp said (so greatly was he infatuated with the dangerous man) that the reading of a letter of Dr. Shrapnel's could do nothing but good to any reflecting human creature: he admitted that as the lost pocket-book was addressed to Mr. Romfrey, it might have been by mistake that he had opened it, and read the topmost letter lying open. But he pressed Rosamund to say whether that one only had been read.

"Only Dr. Shrapnel's letter," Rosamund affirmed. "The letter from Normandy was untouched by him."

"Untouched by anybody?"

"Unopened, Nevil. You look incredulous."

"Not if I have your word, ma'am."

He glanced somewhat contemptuously at his uncle Everard's anachronistic notions of what was fair in war.

To prove to him Mr. Romfrey's affectionate interest in his fortunes, Rosamund mentioned the overtures which had been made to Colonel Halkett for a nuptial alliance between the two houses; and she said, "Your uncle Everard was completely won by your manly way of taking his opposition to you in Bevisham. He pays for Captain Baskelett, but you and your fortunes are nearest his heart, Nevil."

Beauchamp hung silent. His first remark was, "Yes, I want money. I must have money." By degrees he seemed to warm to some sense of gratitude. "It was kind of the baron," he said.

"He has a great affection for you, Nevil, though you know he spares no one who chooses to be antagonistic. All that is over. But do you not second him, Nevil? You admire her? You are not adverse?"

Beauchamp signified the horrid intermixture of yes and no, frowned in pain of mind, and walked up and down. "There's no living woman I admire so much."

"She has refused the highest matches."

"I hold her in every way incomparable."

"She tries to understand your political ideas, if she cannot quite sympathize with them, Nevil. And consider how hard it is for a young English lady, bred in refinement, to understand such things."

"Yes," Beauchamp nodded; "yes. Well, more's the pity for me!"

"Ah! Nevil, that fatal Renée!"

"Ma'am, I acquit you of any suspicion of your having read her letter in this pocket-book. She wishes me to marry. You would have seen it written here. She wishes it."

"Fly, clipped wing!" murmured Rosamund, and purposely sent a buzz into her ears to shut out his extravagant talk of Renée's friendly wishes.

"How is it you women will not believe in the sincerity of a woman!" he exclaimed.

"Nevil, I am not alluding to the damage done to your election."

"To my candidature, ma'am. You mean those

rumours, those lies of the enemy. Tell me how I could suppose you were alluding to them. You bring them forward now to justify your charge of 'fatal' against her. She has one fault; she wants courage; she has none other, not one that is not excusable. We won't speak of France. What did her father say?"

"Colonel Halkett? I do not know. He and his daughter come here next week, and the colonel will expect to meet you here. That does not look like so positive an objection to you?"

"To me personally, no," said Beauchamp. "But Mr. Romfrey has not told me that I am to meet them."

"Perhaps he has not thought it worth while. It is not his way. He has asked you to come. You and Miss Halkett will be left to yourselves. Her father assured Mr. Romfrey that he should not go beyond advising her. His advice might not be exactly favourable to you at present, but if you sued and she accepted—and she would, I am convinced she would; she was here with me, talking of you a whole afternoon, and I have eyes—then he would not oppose the match, and then I should see you settled, the husband of the handsomest wife and richest heiress in England."

A vision of Cecilia swam before him, gracious in stateliness.

Two weeks back Renée's expression of a wish that he would marry had seemed to him an idle sentence in a letter breathing of her own intolerable situation. The marquis had been struck down by illness. What if she were to be soon suddenly free? But Renée could not be looking to freedom, otherwise she never would have written the wish for him to marry. She wrote perhaps hearing temptation whisper; perhaps wishing to save herself and him by the aid of a tie that would bring his honour into play and fix his loyalty. He remembered Dr. Shrapnel's written words: "*Rebellion against society and advocacy of humanity run counter.*" They had a stronger effect on him than when he was ignorant of his uncle Everard's plan to match him with Cecilia. He took refuge from them in the image of that beautiful desolate Renée, born to be beloved, now wasted, worse than trodden under foot—perverted; a life that looked to him for direction and resuscitation. She was as good as dead in her marriage. It was impossible for him ever to think of Renée without the surprising thrill of his enchantment with her, and tender pity that drew her closer to him by darkening her brightness.

Still a man may love his wife. A wife like Cecilia was not to be imagined coldly. Let the knot once be tied, it would not be regretted, could not be; hers was a character, and hers a smile, firmly assuring him of that.

He told Mr. Romfrey that he should be glad to meet Colonel Halkett and Cecilia. Business called him to Holdesbury. Thence he betook himself to Dr. Shrapnel's cottage to say farewell to Jenny Denham previous to her departure for Switzerland with her friend Clara Sherwin. She had never seen a snow-mountain, and it was pleasant to him to observe in her eyes, which he had known weighing and balancing intellectual questions more than he quite liked, a childlike effort to conjure in imagination the glories of the Alps. She appeared very happy, only a little anxious about leaving Dr. Shrapnel with no one to take care of him for a whole month. Beauchamp promised he would run over to him from Holdesbury, only an hour by rail, as often as he could. He envied her the sight of the Alps, he said, and tried to give her an idea of them, from which he broke off to boast of a famous little Jersey bull that he had won from a rival, an American, deeply in love with the bull; cutting him out by telegraph, by just five minutes.

The latter had examined the bull in the island and had passed on to Paris, not suspecting there would be haste to sell him. Beauchamp seeing the bull advertised, took him on trust, galloped to the nearest telegraph station forthwith, and so obtained possession of him; and the bull was now shipped on the voyage. But for this precious bull, however, and other business, he would have been able to spend almost the entire month with Dr. Shrapnel, he said regretfully. Miss Denham on the contrary did not regret his active occupation. The story of his rush from the breakfast-table to the stables, and gallop away to the station, while the American Quaker gentleman soberly paced down a street in Paris on the same errand, in invisible rivalry, touched her risible fancy. She was especially pleased to think of him living in harmony with his uncle—that strange, lofty, powerful man, who by plot or by violence punished opposition to his will, but who must be kind at heart, as well as forethoughtful of his nephew's good; the assurance of it being that when the conflict was at an end he had immediately installed him as manager of one of his estates, to give his energy play and make him practically useful.

The day before she left home was passed by

the three in botanising, some miles distant from Bevisham, over sand country, marsh and meadow; Dr. Shrapnel, deep in the science, on one side of her, and Beauchamp, requiring instruction in the names and properties of every plant and simple, on the other. It was a day of summer sweetness, gentle laughter, conversation, and the happiest homeliness. The politicians uttered barely a syllable of politics. The dinner basket was emptied heartily to make way for herb and flower, and at night the expedition homeward was crowned with stars along a road refreshed by mid-day thunder-showers and smelling of the rain in the dust, past meadows keenly scenting, gardens giving out their innermost balm and odour. Late at night they drank tea in Jenny's own garden. They separated a little after two in the morning, when the faded western light still lay warm on a bow of sky, and on the level of the east it quickened. Jenny felt sure she should long for that yesterday when she was among foreign scenes, even among high Alps—those mysterious eminences which seemed in her imagination to know of heaven and have the dawn of a new life for her beyond their peaks.

Her last words when stepping into the railway carriage were to Beauchamp: “ *Will* you take care

of him?" She flung her arms round Dr. Shrapnel's neck, and gazed at him under troubled eyelids which seemed to be passing in review every vision of possible harm that might come to him during her absence; and so she continued gazing, and at no one but Dr. Shrapnel until the bend of the line cut him from her sight. Beauchamp was a very secondary person on that occasion, and he was unused to being so in the society of women—unused to find himself entirely eclipsed by their interest in another. He speculated on it, wondering at her concentrated fervency; for he had not supposed her to possess much warmth.

After she was fairly off on her journey, Dr. Shrapnel mentioned to Beauchamp a case of a Steynham poacher, whom he had thought it his duty to supply with means of defence. It was a common poaching case.

Beauchamp was not surprised that Mr. Romfrey and Dr. Shrapnel should come to a collision; the marvel was that it had never occurred before, and Beauchamp said at once: "Oh, my uncle Mr. Romfrey would rather see them stand their ground than not." He was disposed to think well of his uncle. The Jersey bull called him away to Holdesbury.

Captain Baskelett heard of this poaching case at Steynham, where he had to appear in person when he was in want of cheques, and the Bevisham dinner furnished an excuse for demanding one. He would have preferred a positive sum annually. Mr. Romfrey, however, though he wrote his cheques out like the lord he was by nature, exacted the request for them; a system that kept the gallant gentleman on his good behaviour, probably at a lower cost than the regular stipend. In handing the cheque to Cecil Baskelett, Mr. Romfrey spoke of a poacher, of an old poaching family called the Dicketts, who wanted punishment and was to have it, but Mr. Romfrey's local lawyer had informed him that the man Shrapnel was, as usual, supplying the means of defence. For his own part, Mr. Romfrey said, he had no objection to one rascal's backing another, and Shrapnel might hit his hardest, only perhaps Nevil might somehow get mixed up in it, and Nevil was going on quietly now—he had in fact just done capitally in lassoing with a shot of the telegraph a splendid little Jersey bull that a Yankee was after: and on the whole it was best to try to keep him quiet, for he was mad about that man Shrapnel; Shrapnel was his joss: and if legal knocks came of this business Nevil

might be thinking of interfering: "Or he and I may be getting to exchange a lot of shindy letters," Mr. Romfrey said. "Tell him I take Shrapnel just like any other man, and don't want to hear apologies, and I don't mix him up in it. Tell him if he likes to have an explanation from me, I'll give it him when he comes here. You can run over to Holdesbury the morning after your dinner."

Captain Baskellett said he would go. He was pleased with his cheque at the time, but hearing subsequently that Nevil was coming to Steynham to meet Colonel Halkett and his daughter, he became displeased, considering it a very silly commission. The more he thought of it the more ridiculous and unworthy it appeared. He asked himself and Lord Palmet also why he should have to go to Nevil at Holdesbury to tell him of circumstances that he would hear of two or three days later at Steynham. There was no sense in it. The only conclusion for him was that the scheming woman Culling had determined to bring down every man concerned in the Bevisham election, and particularly Mr. Romfrey, on his knees before Nevil. Holdesbury had been placed at his disposal, and the use of the house in London, which latter would have been extremely serviceable to Cecil as a

place of dinners to the Parliament of Great Britain in lieu of the speech-making generally expected of members, and not so effectively performed. One would think the baron had grown afraid of old Nevil! He had spoken as if he were.

Cecil railed unreservedly to Lord Palmet against that woman "Mistress Culling," as it pleased him to term her, and who could be offended by his calling her so? His fine wit revelled in bestowing titles that were at once batteries directed upon persons he hated, and entrenchments for himself.

At four o'clock on a sultry afternoon he sat at table with his Bevisham supporters, and pledged them correspondingly in English hotel champagne, sherry and claret. At seven he was rid of them, but parched and heated, as he deserved to be, he owned, for drinking the poison. It would be a good subject for Parliament if he could get it up, he reflected.

"And now," said he to Palmet, "we might be crossing over to the Club if I hadn't to go about that stupid business to Holdesbury to-morrow morning. We shall miss the race, or, at least, the start."

The idea struck him: "Ten to one old Nevil's with Shrapnel," and no idea could be more natural.

"We'll call on Shrapnel," said Palmet. "We shall see Jenny Denham. He gives her out as his niece. Whatever she is she's a brimming little beauty. I assure you, Bask, you seldom see so pretty a girl."

Wine, which has directed men's footsteps upon more marvellous adventures, took them to a chemist's shop for a cooling effervescent draught, and thence through the town to the address, furnished to them by the chemist, of Dr. Shrapnel on the common.

Bad wine, which is responsible for the fate of half the dismal bodies hanging from trees, weltering by rocks, grovelling and bleaching round the bedabbled mouth of the poet's Cave of Despair, had rendered Captain Baskett's temper extremely irascible; so when he caught sight of Dr. Shrapnel walking in his garden, and perceived him of a giant's height, his eyes fastened on the writer of the abominable letter with an exultation peculiar to men having a devil inside them that kicks to be out. The sun was low, blazing among the thicker branches of the pollard forest trees, and through sprays of hawthorn. Dr. Shrapnel stopped, facing the visible master of men, at the end of his walk before he turned his back to continue the exercise

and some discourse he was holding aloud either to the heavens or bands of invisible men.

"Ahem, Dr. Shrapnel!" He was accosted twice, the second time imperiously.

He saw two gentlemen outside the garden-hedge.

"I spoke, sir," said Captain Baskelett.

"I hear you now, sir," said the doctor, walking in a parallel line with them.

"I desired to know, sir, if you are Dr. Shrapnel?"

"I am."

They arrived at the garden-gate.

"You have a charming garden, Dr. Shrapnel," said Lord Palmet, very affably and loudly, with a steady observation of the cottage windows.

Dr. Shrapnel flung the gate open.

Lord Palmet raised his hat and entered, crying loudly, "A very charming garden, upon my word!"

Captain Baskelett followed him, bowing stiffly.

"I am," he said, "Captain Beauchamp's cousin. I am Captain Baskelett, one of the members for the borough."

The doctor said, "Ah."

"I wish to see Captain Beauchamp, sir. He is absent?"

"I shall have him here shortly, sir."

"Oh, you will have him!" Cecil paused.

"Admirable roses!" exclaimed Lord Palmet.

"You *have* him, I think," said Cecil, "if what we hear is correct. I wish to know, sir, whether the case you are conducting against his uncle is one you have communicated to Captain Beauchamp. I repeat, I am here to inquire if he is privy to it. You may hold family ties in contempt—Now, sir! I request you abstain from provocations with me."

Dr. Shrapnel had raised his head, with something of the rush of a rocket, from the stooping posture to listen, and his frown of non-intelligence might be interpreted as the coming on of the fury Radicals are prone to, by a gentleman who believed in their constant disposition to explode.

Cecil made play with a pacifying hand. "We shall arrive at no understanding unless you are good enough to be perfectly calm. I repeat, my cousin Captain Beauchamp is more or less at variance with his family, owing to these doctrines of yours, and your extraordinary Michael-Scott-the-wizard kind of spell you seem to have cast upon his common sense as a man of the world. *You have him*, as you say. I do not dispute it. I have no doubt you

have him fast. But here is a case demanding a certain respect for decency. Pray, if I may ask you, be still, be quiet, and hear me out if you can. I am accustomed to explain myself to the comprehension of most men who are at large, and I tell you candidly I am not to be deceived or diverted from my path by a show of ignorance."

"What is your immediate object, sir?" said Dr. Shrapnel, chagrined by the mystification within him, and a fear that his patience was going.

"Exactly," Cecil nodded. He was acute enough to see that he had established the happy commencement of fretfulness in the victim, which is equivalent to a hook well struck in the mouth of your fish, and with an angler's joy he prepared to play his man. "Exactly. I have stated it. And you ask me. But I really must decline to run over the whole ground again for you. I am here to fulfil a duty to my family; a highly disagreeable one to me. I may fail, like the lady who came here previous to the election, for the result of which I am assured I ought to thank your eminently disinterested services. I do. You recollect a lady calling on you?"

Dr. Shrapnel consulted his memory. "I think I have a recollection of some lady calling."

"Oh ! you think you have a recollection of some lady calling."

"Do you mean a lady connected with Captain Beauchamp ?"

"A lady connected with Captain Beauchamp ! You are not aware of the situation of the lady ?"

"If I remember, she was a kind of confidential housekeeper, some one said, to Captain Beauchamp's uncle."

"A kind of confidential housekeeper ! She is recognised in our family as a lady, sir. I can hardly expect better treatment at your hands than she met with, but I do positively request you to keep your temper whilst I am explaining my business to you. Now, sir ! what now ?"

A trifling breeze will set the tall tree bending, and Dr. Shrapnel did indeed appear to display the agitation of a full-driving storm when he was but harassed and vexed.

"Will you mention your business concisely, if you please," he said.

"Precisely ; it is my endeavour. I supposed I had done so. To be frank, I would advise you to summon a member of your household, wife, daughter, housekeeper, any one you like, to whom you may

appeal, and I too, whenever your recollections are at fault."

"I am competent," said the doctor.

"But in justice to you," urged Cecil considerably.

Dr. Shrapnel smoothed his chin hastily. "Have you done?"

"Believe me, the instant I have an answer to my question, I have done."

"Name your question."

"Very well, sir. Now mark, I will be plain with you. There is no escape for you from this. You destroy my cousin's professional prospects—I request you to listen!—you blast his career in the navy; it was considered promising. He was a gallant officer and a smart seaman. Very well. You set him up as a politician, to be knocked down, to a dead certainty. You set him against his class; you embroil him with his family . . ."

"On all those points," interposed Dr. Shrapnel, after dashing a hand to straighten his forelock; but Cecil vehemently entreated him to control his temper.

"I say you embroil him with his family, you cause him to be in everlasting altercation with his uncle, Mr. Romfrey, materially to his personal detri-

ment; and the question of his family is one that every man of sense would apprehend on the spot; for we, you should know, have, sir, an opinion of Captain Beauchamp's talents and abilities forbidding us to think he could possibly be the total simpleton you make him appear, unless to the seductions of your political instructions, other seductions were added. . . . You apprehend me, I am sure."

"I don't," cried the doctor, descending from his height and swinging about forlornly.

"Oh! yes, you do; you do indeed, you cannot avoid it; you quite apprehend me; it is admitted that you take my meaning: I insist on that. I have nothing to say but what is complimentary of the young lady, whoever she may turn out to be; bewitching, no doubt; and to speak frankly, Dr. Shrapnel, I, and I am pretty certain every honest man would think with me, I take it to be ten times more creditable to my cousin Captain Beauchamp that he should be under a lady's influence than under yours. Come, sir! I ask you. You must confess that a gallant officer and great admirer of the sex does not look such a donkey if he is led in silken strings by a beautiful creature. And mark—stop! mark this, Dr. Shrapnel: I say, to the

lady we can all excuse a good deal, and at the same time you are to be congratulated on first-rate diplomacy in employing so charming an agent. I wish, I really wish you did it generally, I assure you: only, mark this—I do beg you to contain yourself for a minute, if possible—I say, my cousin Captain Beauchamp is fair game to hunt, and there is no law to prevent the chase, only you must not expect us to be quiet spectators of your sport; and we have, I say, undoubtedly a right to lay the case before the lady, and induce her to be a peace-agent in the family if we can. Very well.”

“This garden is redolent of a lady’s hand,” sighed Palmet, poetical in his dejection.

“Have you taken too much wine, gentlemen?” said Dr. Shrapnel.

Cecil put this impertinence aside with a graceful sweep of his fingers. “You attempt to elude me, sir.”

“Not I! You mention some lady.”

“Exactly. A young lady.”

“What is the name of the lady?”

“Oh! You ask the name of the lady. And I too. What is it? I have heard two or three names.”

“Then you have heard villanies.”

"Denham, Jenny Denham, Miss Jenny Denham," said Palmet, rejoiced at the opportunity of trumpeting her name so that she should not fail to hear it.

"I stake my reputation I have heard her called Shrapnel—Miss Shrapnel," said Cecil.

The doctor glanced hastily from one to the other of his visitors. "The young lady is my ward; I am her guardian," he said.

Cecil pursed his mouth. "I have heard her called your niece."

"Niece—ward; she is a lady by birth and education, in manners, accomplishments, and character; and she is under my protection," cried Dr. Shrapnel.

Cecil bowed. "So you are for gentle birth? I forgot: you are for morality too, and for praying; exactly; I recollect. But now let me tell you, entirely with the object of conciliation, my particular desire is to see the young lady, in your presence of course, and endeavour to persuade her, as I have very little doubt I shall do, assuming that you give me fair play, to exercise her influence on this occasion contrary to yours, and save my cousin Captain Beauchamp from a fresh misunderstanding with his uncle Mr. Romfrey. Now, sir; now, there!"

“You will not see Miss Denham with my sanction ever,” said Dr. Shrapnel.

“Oh ! Then I perceive your policy. Mark, sir, my assumption was that the young lady would, on hearing my representations, exert herself to heal the breach between Captain Beauchamp and his family. You stand in the way. You treat me as you treated the lady who came here formerly to wrest your dupe from your clutches. If I mistake not, she saw the young lady you acknowledge to be your ward.”

Dr. Shrapnel flashed back : “I acknowledge ? Mercy and justice ! is there no peace with the man ? You walk here to me, I can’t yet guess why, from a town where I have enemies, and every scandal flies touching me and mine ; and you——” He stopped short to master his anger. He subdued it so far as to cloak it in an attempt to speak reasoningly, as angry men sometimes deceive themselves in doing, despite the good maxim for the wrathful—speak not at all. “See,” said he, “I was never married. My dear friend dies, and leaves me his child to protect and rear ; and though she bears her father’s name, she is most wrongly and foully made to share the blows levelled at her guardian. Ay, have at me, all of you, as much as

you will! Hold off from her. Were it true, the cowardice would be not a whit the smaller. Why, casting a stone like that, were it the size of a pebble and the weight of a glance, is to toss the whole cowardly world on an innocent young girl. And why suspect evil? You talk of that lady who paid me a visit here once, and whom I treated becomingly, I swear. I never do otherwise. She was a handsome woman; and what was she? The housekeeper of Captain Beauchamp's uncle. Hear me, if you please! To go with the world, I have as good a right to suppose the worst of an attractive lady in that situation as you regarding my ward: better warrant for scandalising, I think;—to go with the world. But now——”

Cecil checked him, ejaculating, “Thank you, Dr. Shrapnel; I thank you most cordially,” with a shining smile. “Stay, sir! no more. I take my leave of you. Not another word. No ‘buts!’ I recognise that conciliation is out of the question: you are the natural protector of poachers, and you will not grant me an interview with the young lady you call your ward, that I may represent to her, as a person we presume to have a chance of moving you, how easily—I am determined you shall hear me, Dr. Shrapnel!—how easily the position of

Captain Beauchamp may become precarious with his uncle Mr. Romfrey. And let me add—‘but’ and ‘but’ me till Doomsday, sir!—if you were—I *do* hear you, sir, and you shall hear me—if you were a younger man, I say, I would hold you answerable to me for your scandalous and disgraceful insinuations.”

Dr. Shrapnel was adroitly fenced and overshouted. He shrugged, stuttered, swayed, wagged a bulrush-head, flapped his elbows, puffed like a swimmer in the breakers, tried many times to expostulate, and finding the effort useless, for his adversary was copious and commanding, relapsed, eyeing him as an object far removed.

Cecil rounded one of his perplexingly empty sentences and turned on his heel.

“War, then!” he said.

“As you like,” retorted the doctor.

“Oh! Very good. Good evening.” Cecil slightly lifted his hat, with the short projection of the head of the stately peacock in its walk, and passed out of the garden. Lord Palmet, deeply disappointed and mystified, went after him, leaving Dr. Shrapnel to shorten his garden walk with enormous long strides.

“I’m afraid you didn’t manage the old boy,”

Palmet complained. "They're people who have tea in their gardens; we might have sat down with them and talked, the best friends in the world, and come again to-morrow: might have called her Jenny in a week. She didn't show her pretty nose at any of the windows."

His companion pooh-poohed and said: "Foh! I'm afraid I permitted myself to lose my self-command for a moment."

Palmet sung out an amorous couplet to console himself. Captain Baskett respected the poetic art for its magical power over woman's virtue, but he disliked hearing verses, and they were ill-suited to Palmet. He abused his friend roundly, telling him it was contemptible to be quoting verses. He was irritable still.

He declared himself nevertheless much refreshed by his visit to Dr. Shrapnel. "We shall have to sleep to-night in this unhallowed town, but I needn't be off to Holdesbury in the morning; I've done my business. I shall write to the baron to-night, and we can cross the water to-morrow in time for operations."

The letter to Mr. Romfrey was composed before midnight. It was a long one, and when he had finished it, Cecil remembered that the act of com-

position had been assisted by a cigar in his mouth, and Mr. Romfrey detested the smell of tobacco. There was nothing to be done but to write the letter over again, somewhat more briefly: it ran thus:—

“Thinking to kill two birds at a blow, I went yesterday with Palmet after the dinner at this place to Shrapnel’s house, where, as I heard, I stood a chance of catching friend Nevil. The young person living under the man’s protection was absent, and so was the ‘poor dear commander,’ perhaps attending on his bull. Shrapnel said he was expecting him. I write to you to confess I thought myself a cleverer fellow than I am. I talked to Shrapnel and tried hard to reason with him. I hope I can keep my temper under ordinary circumstances. You will understand that it required remarkable restraint when I make you acquainted with the fact that a lady’s name was introduced, which, as your representative in relation to her, I was bound to defend from a gratuitous and scoundrelly aspersion. Shrapnel’s epistle to ‘brave Beauchamp’ is Church hymnification in comparison with his conversation. He is indubitably one of the greatest ruffians of his time.

“I took the step with the best of intentions, and

all I can plead is that I am not a diplomatist of sixty. His last word was that he is for war with us. As far as we men are concerned it is of small importance. I should think that the sort of society he would scandalize a lady in is not much to be feared. I have given him his warning. He tops me by about a head, and loses his temper every two minutes. I could have drawn him out deliciously if he had not rather disturbed mine. By this time my equanimity is restored. The only thing I apprehend is your displeasure with me for having gone to the man. I have done no good, and it prevents me from running over to Holdesbury to see Nevil, for if 'shindy letters,' as you call them, are bad, shindy meetings are worse. I should be telling him my opinion of Shrapnel, he would be firing out, I should retort, he would yell, I should snap my fingers, and he would go into convulsions. I am convinced that a cattle-breeder ought to keep himself particularly calm. So unless I have further orders from you I refrain from going.

"The dinner was enthusiastic. I sat three hours among my Commons, they on me for that length of time—fatiguing, but a duty."

Cecil subscribed his name with the warmest affection toward his uncle.

The brevity of the second letter had not brought him nearer to the truth in rescinding the picturesque accessories of his altercation with Dr. Shrapnel, but it veraciously expressed the sentiments he felt, and that was the palpable truth for him.

He posted the letter next morning.

CHAPTER XII.

SHOWING A CHIVALROUS GENTLEMAN SET IN MOTION.

ABOUT noon the day following, on board the steam-yacht of the Countess of Menai, Cecil was very much astonished to see Mr. Romfrey descending into a boat hard by, from Grancey Lespel's hired cutter. Steam was up, and the countess was off for a cruise in the Channel, as it was not a race-day, but seeing Mr. Romfrey's hand raised, she spoke to Cecil, and immediately gave orders to wait for the boat. This lady was a fervent admirer of the knightly gentleman, and had reason to like him, for he had once been her champion. Mr. Romfrey mounted the steps, received her greeting, and beckoned to Cecil. He carried a gold-headed horse-whip under his arm. Lady Menai would gladly have persuaded him to be one of her company for the day's voyage, but he said he had business in

Bevisham, and moving aside with Cecil, put the question to him abruptly: "What were the words used by Shrapnel?"

"The identical words?" Captain Baskelett asked. He could have tripped out the words with the fluency of ancient historians relating what great kings, ambassadors, or generals may well have uttered on state occasions, but if you want the identical words, who is to remember them the day after they have been delivered? He said: "Well, as for the identical words, I really, and I was tolerably excited, sir, and upon my honour, the identical words are rather difficult to. . ." He glanced at the horsewhip, and pricked by the sight of it to proceed, thought it good to soften the matter if possible. "I don't quite recollect. . . I wrote off to you rather hastily. I think he said—but Palmet was there."

"Shrapnel spoke the words before Lord Palmet?" said Mr. Romfrey austere.

Captain Baskelett summoned Palmet to come near, and inquired of him what he had heard Shrapnel say, suggesting: "He spoke of a handsome woman for a housekeeper, and all the world knew her character?"

Mr. Romfrey cleared his throat.

“Or knew she had *no* character,” Cecil pursued in a fit of gratified spleen, in scorn of the woman. “Don’t you recollect his accent in pronouncing *housekeeper* ?”

The menacing thunder sounded from Mr. Romfrey. He was patient in appearance, and waited for Cecil’s witness to corroborate the evidence.

It happened (and here we are in one of the circles of small things producing great consequences, which have inspired diminutive philosophers with ironical visions of history and the littleness of man), it happened that Lord Palmet, the humanest of young aristocrats, well-disposed toward the entire world, especially to women, also to men in any way related to pretty women, had just lit a cigar, and it was a cigar that he had been recommended to try the flavour of; and though he, having his wits about him, was fully aware that shipboard is no good place for a trial of the delicacy of tobacco in the leaf, he had begun puffing and sniffing in a critical spirit, and scarcely knew for the moment what to decide as to this particular cigar. He remembered, however, Mr. Romfrey’s objection to tobacco. Imagining that he saw the expression of a profound distaste in that gentleman’s more than usually serious face, he hesitated between casting

the cigar into the water and retaining it. He decided upon the latter course, and held the cigar behind his back, bowing to Mr. Romfrey at about a couple of yards distance, and saying to Cecil, "Housekeeper; yes, I remember hearing housekeeper. I think so. Housekeeper? yes, oh yes."

"And handsome housekeepers were doubtful characters," Captain Baskellett prompted him.

Palmet laughed out a single "Ha!" that seemed to excuse him for lounging away to the forepart of the vessel, where he tugged at his fine specimen of a cigar to rekindle it, and discharged it with a wry grimace, so delicate is the flavour of that weed, and so adversely ever is it affected by a breeze and a moist atmosphere. He could then return undivided in his mind to Mr. Romfrey and Cecil, but the subject was not resumed in his presence.

The Countess of Menai steamed into Bevisham to land Mr. Romfrey there. "I can be out in the Channel any day; it is not every day that I see you," she said, in support of her proposal to take him over.

They sat together conversing, apart from the rest of the company, until they sighted Bevisham, when Mr. Romfrey stood up, and a little crowd of men came round him to enjoy his famous racy talk.

Captain Baskelett offered to land with him. He declined companionship. Dropping her hand in his the countess asked him what he had to do in that town, and he replied, "I have to demand an apology."

Answering the direct look of his eyes, she said, "Oh, I shall not speak of it."

In his younger days, if the rumour was correct, he had done the same on her account.

He stepped into the boat, and presently they saw him mount the pier-steps, with the riding-whip under his arm, his head more than commonly bent, a noticeable point in a man of his tall erect figure. The ladies and some of the gentlemen thought he was looking particularly grave, even sorrowful.

Lady Menai inquired of Captain Baskelett whether he knew the nature of his uncle's business in Bevisham, the town he despised.

What could Cecil say but no? His uncle had not imparted it to him.

She was flattered in being the sole confidante, and said no more.

The sprightly ingenuity of Captain Baskelett's mind would have informed him of the nature of his uncle's expedition we may be sure, had he put it to the trial; for Mr. Romfrey was as plain to read as

a rudimentary sum in arithmetic, and like the tracings of a pedigree-map his preliminary steps to deeds were seen pointing on their issue in lines of straight descent. But Cecil could protest that he was not bound to know, and considering that he was neither bound to know nor to speculate, he determined to stand on his right. So effectually did he accomplish the task, that he was frequently surprised during the evening and the night by the effervescence of a secret exultation rising imp-like within him, that was, he assured himself, perfectly unaccountable.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EFFORT TO CONQUER CECILIA IN BEAUCHAMP'S FASHION.

THE day after Mr. Romfrey's landing in Bevisham a full South-wester stretched the canvas of yachts of all classes, schooner, cutter and yawl, on the lively green water between the island and the forest shore. Cecilia's noble schooner was sure to be out in such a ringing breeze, for the pride of it as well as the pleasure. She landed her father at the Club steps, and then bore away eastward to sight a cutter race, the breeze beginning to stiffen. Looking back against sun and wind, she saw herself pursued by a saucy little 15-ton craft that had been in her track since she left the Otley river before noon, dipping and straining, with every inch of sail set; as mad a stern-chase as ever was witnessed: and who could the man at the tiller, clad cap-à-pie in tarpaulin, be? She led him dancing away, to prove

his resoluteness and laugh at him. She had the powerful wings, and a glory in them coming of this pursuit: her triumph was delicious, until the occasional sparkle of the tarpaulin was lost, the small boat appeared a motionless object far behind, and all ahead of her exceedingly dull, though the race hung there and the crowd of sail.

Cecilia's transient flutter of coquetry created by the animating air and her queenly flight was over. She fled splendidly and she came back graciously. But he refused her open hand, as it were. He made as if to stand across her tack, and reconsidering it evidently scorned his advantage and challenged the stately vessel for a beat up against the wind. It was as pretty as a Court minuet. But presently Cecilia stood too far on one tack, and returning to the centre of the channel found herself headed by seamanship. He waved an ironical salute with his sou'-wester. Her retort consisted in bringing her vessel to the wind, and sending a boat for him.

She did it on the impulse; had she consulted her wishes she would rather have seen him at his post, where he seemed in his element, facing the spray and cunningly calculating to get wind and tide in his favour. Partly with regret she saw him, stripped

of his tarpaulin, jump into her boat, as though she had once more to say farewell to sailor Nevil Beauchamp; farewell the bright youth, the hero, the true servant of his country!

That feeling of hers changed when he was on board. The stirring cordial day had put new breath in him.

"Should not the flag be dipped?" he said, looking up at the peak, where the white flag streamed.

"Can you really mistake compassion for defeat?" said she, with a smile.

"Oh! before the wind of course I hadn't a chance."

"How could you be so presumptuous as to give chase? And who has lent you that little cutter?"

Beauchamp had hired her for a month, and he praised her sailing, and pretended to say that the race was not always to the strong in a stiff breeze.

"But in point of fact I was bent on trying how my boat swims, and had no idea of overhauling you. To-day our salt-water lake is as fine as the Mediterranean."

"Omitting the islands and the Mediterranean colour, it is. I have often told you how I love it. I have landed papa at the Club. Are you aware

that we meet you at Steynham the day after to-morrow?"

"Well, we can ride on the downs. The downs between three and four of a summer's morning are as lovely as anything in the world. They have the softest outlines imaginable . . . and remind me of a friend's upper lip when she deigns to smile."

"Is one to rise at that hour to behold the effect? And let me remind you further, Nevil, that the comparison of nature's minor work beside her mighty is an error, if you will be poetical."

She cited a well-known instance of degradation in verse.

But a young man who happens to be intimately acquainted with a certain 'dark eye in woman' will not so lightly be brought to consider that the comparison of tempestuous night to the flashing of those eyes of hers topples the scene headlong from grandeur. And if Beauchamp remembered rightly, the scene was the Alps at night.

He was prepared to contest Cecilia's judgment. At that moment the breeze freshened and the canvas lifted: from due south the yacht swung her sails to drive toward the west, and Cecilia's face and hair came out golden in the sunlight. Speech was

difficult, admiration natural, so he sat beside her, admiring in silence.

She said a good word for the smartness of his little yacht.

"This is my first trial of her," said Beauchamp. "I hired her chiefly to give Dr. Shrapnel a taste of salt air. I've no real right to be idling about. His ward Miss Denham is travelling in Switzerland; the dear old man is alone, and not quite so well as I should wish. Change of scene will do him good. I shall land him on the French coast for a couple of days, or take him down channel.

Cecilia gazed abstractedly at a passing schooner.

"He works too hard," said Beauchamp.

"Who does?"

"Dr. Shrapnel."

Some one else whom we have heard of works too hard, and it would be happy for mankind if he did not.

Cecilia named the schooner; an American that had beaten our crack yachts. Beauchamp sprang up to spy at the American.

"That's the *Corinne*, is she!"

Yankee craftiness on salt water always excited his respectful attention as a spectator.

"And what is the name of your boat, Nevil?"

“The fool of an owner calls her the *Petrel*. It’s not that I’m superstitious, but to give a boat a name of bad augury to sailors appears to me . . . however, I’ve argued it with him and I will have her called the *Curlew*. Carrying Dr. Shrapnel and me, *Petrel* would be thought the proper title for her—isn’t that your idea?”

He laughed and she smiled, and then he became overcast with his political face, and said, “I hope—I believe—you will alter your opinion of him. Can it be an opinion when it’s founded on nothing? You know really nothing of him. I have in my pocket what I believe would alter your mind about him entirely. I do think so; and I think so because I feel you would appreciate his deep sincerity and real nobleness.”

“Is it a talisman that you have, Nevil?”

“No, it’s a letter.”

Cecilia’s cheeks took fire.

“I should so much like to read it to you,” said he.

“Do not, please,” she replied with a dash of supplication in her voice.

“Not the whole of it—an extract here and there? I want you so much to understand him.”

“I am sure I should not.”

“Let me try you!”

"Pray do not."

"Merely to show you"

"But, Nevil, I do not wish to understand him."

"But you have only to listen for a few minutes, and I want you to know what good reason I have to reverence him as a teacher and a friend."

Cecilia looked at Beauchamp with wonder. A confused recollection of the contents of the letter declaimed at Mount Laurels in Captain Baskett's absurd sing-song, surged up in her mind revoltingly. She signified a decided negative. Something of a shudder accompanied the expression of it.

But he as little as any member of the Romfrey blood was framed to let the word no stand quietly opposed to him. And the no that a woman utters! It calls for wholesome tyranny. Those old, those hoar-old duellists, yes and no, have rarely been better matched than in Beauchamp and Cecilia. For if he was obstinate in attack she had great resisting power. Twice to listen to that letter was beyond her endurance. Indeed it cast a shadow on him and disfigured him, and when, affecting to plead, he said: "You must listen to it to please me, for my sake, Cecilia," she answered: "It is for your sake, Nevil, I decline to."

"Why, what do you know of it?" he exclaimed.

"I know the kind of writing it would be."

"How do you know it?"

"I have heard of some of Dr. Shrapnel's opinions."

"You imagine him to be subversive, intolerant, immoral, and the rest! all that comes under your word revolutionary."

"Possibly; but I must defend myself from hearing what I know will be certain to annoy me."

"But he is the reverse of immoral: and I intend to read you parts of the letter to prove to you that he is not the man you would blame, but I, and that if ever I am worthier . . . worthier of you, as I hope to become, it will be owing to this admirable and good old man."

Cecilia trembled: she was touched to the quick. Yet it was not pleasant to her to be wooed obliquely, through Dr. Shrapnel.

She recognised the very letter, crowned with many stamps, thick with many pages, in Beauchamp's hands.

"When you are at Steynham you will probably hear my uncle Everard's version of this letter," he said. "The baron chooses to think everything fair in war, and the letter came accidentally into his hands with the seal broken; well, he read it. And

Cecilia, you can fancy the sort of stuff he would make of it. Apart from that, I want you particularly to know how much I am indebted to Dr. Shrapnel. Won't you learn to like him a little? Won't you tolerate him?—I could almost say, for my sake! He and I are at variance on certain points, but taking him altogether, I am under deeper obligations to him than to any man on earth. He has found where I bend and waver."

"I recognise your chivalry, Nevil."

"He has done his best to train me to be of some service. Where's the chivalry in owning a debt? He is one of our true warriors; fearless and blameless. I have had my heroes before. You know how I loved Robert Hall: his death is a gap in my life. He is a light for fighting Englishmen—who fight with the sword. But the scale of the war, the cause, and the end in view, raise Dr. Shrapnel above the bravest I have ever had the luck to meet. Soldiers and sailors have their excitement to keep them up to the mark; praise and rewards. He is in his eight-and-sixtieth year, and he has never received anything but obloquy for his pains. Half of the small fortune he has goes in charities and subscriptions. Will that touch you? But I think little of that, and so does he. Charity is a common duty.

The dedication of a man's life and whole mind to a cause, there's heroism. I wish I were eloquent; I wish I could move you."

Cecilia turned her face to him. "I listen to you with pleasure, Nevil; but please do not read the letter."

"Yes; a paragraph or two I must read."

She rose.

He was promptly by her side. "If I say I ask you for one sign that you care for me in some degree?"

"I have not for a moment ceased to be your friend, Nevil, since I was a child."

"But if you allow yourself to be so prejudiced against my best friend that you will not hear a word of his writing, are you friendly?"

"Feminine, and obstinate," said Cecilia.

"Give me your eyes an instant. I know you think me reckless and lawless: now is not that true? You doubt whether, if a lady gave me her hand I should hold to it in perfect faith. Or, perhaps not that: but you do suspect I should be capable of every sophism under the sun to persuade a woman to break her faith, if it suited me: supposing some passion to be at work. Men who are open to passion have to be taught reflection before

they distinguish between the woman they should sue for love because she would be their best mate, and the woman who has thrown a spell on them. Now what I beg you to let me read you in this letter is a truth nobly stated that has gone into my blood, and changed me. It cannot fail, too, in changing your opinion of Dr. Shrapnel. It makes me wretched that you should be divided from me in your ideas of him. I, you see—and I confess I think it my chief title to honour—reverence him.”

“I regret that I am unable to utter the words of Ruth,” said Cecilia, in a low voice. She felt rather tremulously ; opposed only to the letter and the writer of it, not at all to Beauchamp, except on account of his idolatry of the wicked revolutionist. Far from having a sense of opposition to Beauchamp, she pitied him for his infatuation, and in her lofty mental serenity she warmed to him for the seeming boyishness of his constant and extravagant worship of the man, though such an enthusiasm cast shadows on his intellect.

He was reading a sentence of the letter.

“I hear nothing but the breeze, Nevil,” she said.

The breeze fluttered the letter-sheets: they threatened to fly. Cecilia stepped two paces away.

“Hark; there is a military band playing on the pier,” said she. “I am so fond of hearing music a little off shore.”

Beauchamp consigned the letter to his pocket.

“You are not offended, Nevil?”

“Dear me, no. You haven’t a mind for tonics, that’s all.”

“Healthy persons rarely have,” she remarked, and asked him, smiling softly, whether he had a mind for music.

His insensibility to music was curious, considering how impressionable he was to verse, and to songs of birds. He listened with an oppressed look, as to something the particular secret of which had to be reached by a determined effort of sympathy for those whom it affected. He liked it if she did, and said he liked it, reiterated that he liked it, clearly trying hard to comprehend it, as unmoved by the swell and sigh of the resonant brass as a man could be, while her romantic spirit thrilled to it, and was bountiful in glowing visions and in tenderness.

There hung her hand. She would not have refused to yield it. The hero of her childhood, the friend of her womanhood and her hero still, might have taken her with half a word.

Beauchamp was thinking: She can listen to that brass band, and she shuts her ears to this letter!

The reading of it would have been a prelude to the opening of his heart to her, at the same time that it vindicated his dear and honoured master, as he called Dr. Shrapnel. To speak, without the explanation of his previous reticence which this letter would afford, seemed useless: even the desire to speak was absent, passion being absent.

"I see papa; he is getting into a boat with some one," said Cecilia, and gave orders for the yacht to stand in towards the Club steps. Do you know, Nevil, the Italian common people are not so subject to the charm of music as other races. They have more of the gift, and I think less of the feeling. You do not hear much music in Italy. I remember in the year of Revolution there was danger of a rising in some Austrian city, and a colonel of a regiment commanded his band to play. The mob was put in good humour immediately."

"It's a soporific," said Beauchamp.

"You would not rather have had them rise to be slaughtered?"

"Would you have them waltzed into perpetual servility?"

Cecilia hummed, and suggested: "If one can have them happy in any way?"

"Then the day of destruction may almost be dated."

"Nevil, your terrible view of life must be false."

"I make it out worse to you than to anyone else, because I want our minds to be united."

"Give me a respite now and then."

"With all my heart. And forgive me for beating my drum. I see what others don't see, or else I feel it more; I don't know; but it appears to me our country needs rousing if it's to live. There's a division between poor and rich that you have no conception of, and it can't safely be left unnoticed. I've done."

He looked at her and saw tears on her under-lids.

"My dearest Cecilia!"

"Music makes me childish," said she.

Her father was approaching in the boat. Beside him sat the Earl of Lockrace, latterly classed among the suitors of the lady of Mount Laurels.

A few minutes remained to Beauchamp of his lost opportunity. Instead of seizing them with his usual promptitude, he let them slip, painfully mindful of his treatment of her last year after the drive

into Bevissham, when she was England, and Renée holiday France.

This feeling he fervently translated into the reflection that the bride who would bring him beauty and wealth, and her especial gift of tender womanliness, was not yet so thoroughly mastered as to grant her husband his just prevalence with her, or even indeed his complete independence of action, without which life itself was not desirable.

Colonel Halkett stared at Beauchamp as if he had risen from the deep.

"Have you been in that town this morning?" was one of his first questions to him when he stood on board.

"I came through it," said Beauchamp, and pointed to his little cutter labouring in the distance. "She's mine for a month; I came from Holdesbury to try her;" and then he stated how he had danced attendance on the schooner for a couple of hours before any notice was taken of him, and Cecilia with her graceful humour held up his presumption to scorn.

Her father was eyeing Beauchamp narrowly, and appeared troubled.

"Did you see Mr. Romfrey yesterday, or this morning?" the colonel asked him, mentioning that

Mr. Romfrey had been somewhere about the island yesterday, at which Beauchamp expressed astonishment, for his uncle Everard seldom visited a yachting station.

Colonel Halkett exchanged looks with Cecilia. Hers were inquiring, and he confirmed her side-glance at Beauchamp. She raised her brows: he nodded, to signify that there was gravity in the case. Here the signalling stopped short; she had to carry on a conversation with Lord Lockrace, one of those men who betray the latent despot in an exhibition of discontentment unless they have all a lady's hundred eyes attentive to their discourse.

At last Beauchamp quitted the vessel.

When he was out of hearing, Colonel Halkett said to Cecilia: "Grancey Lespel tells me that Mr. Romfrey called on the man Shrapnel yesterday evening at six o'clock."

"Yes, papa?"

"Now come and see the fittings below," the colonel addressed Lord Lockrace, and murmured to his daughter: "And soundly horsewhipped him!"

Cecilia turned on the instant to gaze after Nevil Beauchamp. She could have wept for pity. Her father's emphasis on 'soundly' declared an approval

of the deed, and she was chilled by a sickening abhorrence and dread of the cruel brute in men, such as, awakened by she knew not what, had haunted her for a year of her girlhood.

"And he deserved it!" the colonel pursued, on emerging from the cabin at Lord Lockrace's heels. "I've no doubt he richly deserved it. The writer of that letter we heard Captain Baskett read the other day deserves the very worst he gets."

"Baskett bored the Club the other night with a letter of a Radical fellow," said Lord Lockrace. "Men who write that stuff should be strung up and whipped by the common hangman."

"It was a private letter," said Cecilia.

"Public or private, Miss Halkett."

Her mind flew back to Seymour Austin for the sense of steadfastness when she heard such language as this, which, taken in conjunction with Dr. Shrapnel's, seemed to uncloak our Constitutional realm and show it boiling up with the frightful elements of primitive societies.

"I suppose we are but half civilised," she said.

"If that," said the earl.

Colonel Halkett protested that he never could quite make out what Radicals were driving at.

"The rents," Lord Lockrace observed in the

conclusive tone of brevity. He did not stay very long.

The schooner was boarded subsequently by another nobleman, an Admiral of the Fleet and ex-minister of the Whig Government, Lord Croyston, who was a friend of Mr. Romfrey's, and thought well of Nevil Beauchamp as a seaman and naval officer, but shook an old head over him as a politician. He came to beg a passage across the water to his marine Lodge, an accident having happened early in the morning to his yacht, the *Lady Violet*. He was able to communicate the latest version of the horsewhipping of Dr. Shrapnel, from which it appeared that after Mr. Romfrey had handsomely flogged the man he flung his card on the prostrate body, to let men know who was responsible for the act. He expected that Mr. Romfrey would be subjected to legal proceedings. "But if there's a pleasure worth paying for it's the trouncing of a villain," said he; and he had been informed that Dr. Shrapnel was a big one. Lord Croyston's favourite country residence was in the neighbourhood of old Mrs. Beauchamp, on the upper Thames. Speaking of Nevil Beauchamp a second time, he alluded to his relations with his great-aunt, said his prospects were bad, that she had interdicted her

house to him, and was devoted to her other great-nephew.

"And so she should be," said Colonel Halkett. "That's a young man who's an Englishman without French gunpowder notions in his head. He works for us down at the mine in Wales a good part of the year, and has tided us over a threatening strike there: gratuitously: I can't get him to accept anything. I can't think why he does it."

"He'll have plenty," said Lord Croyston, level-ling his telescope to sight the racing cutters.

Cecilia fancied she descried Nevil's *Petrel*, dubbed *Curlew*, to eastward, and had a faint gladness in the thought that his knowledge of his uncle Everard's deed of violence would be deferred for another two or three hours.

She tried to persuade her father to wait for Nevil, and invite him to dine at Mount Laurels, and break the news to him gently. Colonel Halkett argued that in speaking of the affair he should certainly not commiserate the man who had got his deserts, and saying this he burst into a petty fury against the epistle of Dr. Shrapnel, which appeared to be growing more monstrous in proportion to his forgetfulness of the details, as mountains gather vastness to the eye at a certain remove. Though he

could not guess the reason for Mr. Romfrey's visit to Bevisham, he was, he said, quite prepared to maintain that Mr. Romfrey had a perfect justification for his conduct.

Cecilia hinted at barbarism. The colonel hinted at high police duties that gentlemen were sometimes called on to perform for the protection of society. "In defiance of its laws?" she asked; and he answered: "Women must not be judging things out of their sphere," with the familiar accent on 'women' which proves their inferiority. He was rarely guilty of it toward his daughter. Evidently he had resolved to back Mr. Romfrey blindly. That epistle of Dr. Shrapnel's merited condign punishment and had met with it, he seemed to rejoice in saying: and this was his abstract of the same: "An old charlatan who tells his dupe to pray every night of his life for the beheading of kings and princes, and scattering of the clergy, and disbanding the army, that he and his rabble may fall upon the wealthy, and show us numbers win; and he'll undertake to make them moral!"

"I wish we were not going to Steynham," said Cecilia.

"So do I. Well, no, I don't," the colonel corrected himself, "no; it's an engagement. I gave

my consent so far. We shall see whether Nevil Beauchamp's a man of any sense."

Her heart sank. This was as much as to let her know that if Nevil broke with his uncle, the treaty of union between the two families, which her father submitted to entertain out of consideration for Mr. Romfrey, would be at an end.

The wind had fallen. Entering her river, Cecilia gazed back at the smooth broad water, and the band of golden beams flung across it from the evening sun over the forest. No little cutter was visible. She could not write to Nevil to bid him come and concert with her in what spirit to encounter his uncle Everard at Steynham. And guests would be at Mount Laurels next day; Lord Lockrace, Lord Croyston, and the Lespels; she could not drive down to Bevisham on the chance of seeing him. Nor was it to be acknowledged even to herself that she so greatly desired to see him and advise him. Why not? Because she was one of the artificial creatures called women (with the accent) who dare not be spontaneous, and cannot act independently if they would continue to be admirable in the world's eye, and who for that object must remain fixed on shelves, like other marketable wares, avoiding motion to avoid shat-

tering or tarnishing. This is their fate, only in degree less inhuman than that of Hellenic and Trojan princesses offered up to the gods, or pretty slaves to the dealers. Their artificiality is at once their bane and their source of superior pride.

Seymour Austin might have reason for seeking to emancipate them, she thought, and blushed in thought that she could never be learning anything but from her own immediate sensations.

Of course it was in her power to write to Beauchamp, just as it had been in his to speak to her, but the fire was wanting in her blood and absent from his mood, so they were kept apart.

Her father knew as little as she what was the positive cause of Mr. Romfrey's chastisement of Dr. Shrapnel. "Cause enough, I don't doubt," he said, and cited the mephitic letter.

Cecilia was not given to suspicions, or she would have had them kindled by a certain wilfulness in his incessant reference to the letter, and exoneration, if not approval, of Mr. Romfrey's conduct.

How did that chivalrous gentleman justify himself for condescending to such an extreme as the use of personal violence? Was there a possibility of his justifying it to Nevil? She was most wretched in her reiteration of these inquiries, for, with a heart

subdued, she had still a mind whose habit of independent judgment was not to be constrained, and while she felt that it was only by siding with Nevil submissively and blindly in this lamentable case that she could hope for happiness, she foresaw the likelihood of her not being able to do so as much as he would desire and demand. This she took for the protest of her pure reason. In reality, grieved though she was on account of that Dr. Shrapnel, her captive heart resented the anticipated challenge to her to espouse his cause or languish.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER AT STEYNHAM.

THE judge pronouncing sentence of condemnation on the criminal is proverbially a sorrowfully-minded man; and still more would he be so had he to undertake the part of executioner as well. This is equivalent to saying that the simple pleasures are no longer with us; it must be a personal enemy now to give us any satisfaction in chastising and slaying. Perhaps by-and-by that will be savourless: we degenerate. There is, nevertheless, ever (and let nature be praised for it) a strong sustainment in the dutiful exertion of our physical energies, and Mr. Everard Romfrey experienced it after he had fulfilled his double office on the person of Dr. Shrapnel by carrying out his own decree. His conscience approved him cheerlessly, as it is the habit of that secret monitor to do when we have no particular advantage coming of the act we have performed;

but the righteous labour of his arm gave him high breathing and an appetite.

He foresaw that he and Nevil would soon be having a wrestle over the matter, hand and thigh ; but a gentleman in the right engaged with a fellow in the wrong has nothing to apprehend ; is, in fact, in the position of a gamepreserver with a poacher. The nearest approach to gratification in that day's work which Mr. Romfrey knew was offered by the picture of Nevil's lamentable attitude above his dirty idol. He conceived it in the mock-mediæval style of our caricaturists:—Shrapnel stretched at his length, half a league, in slashed yellows and blacks, with his bauble beside him, and prodigious pointed toes ; Nevil in parti-coloured tights, on one leg, raising his fists in imprecation to a nose in the firmament.

Gentlemen of an unpractised imaginative capacity cannot vision for themselves exactly what they would, being unable to exercise authority over the proportions and the hues of the objects they conceive, which are very much at the mercy of their sportive caprices ; and the state of mind of Mr. Romfrey is not to be judged by his ridiculous view of the pair. In the abstract he could be sorry for Shrapnel. As he knew himself mag-

nanimous, he promised himself to be forbearing with Nevil.

Moreover, the month of September was drawing nigh; he had plenty to think of. The entire land (signifying all but all of those who occupy the situation of thinkers in it) may be said to have been exhaling the same thought in connection with September. Our England holds possession of a considerable portion of the globe, and it keeps the world in awe to see her bestowing so considerable a portion of her intelligence upon her recreations. To prosecute them with her whole heart is an ingenious exhibition of her power. Mr. Romfrey was of those who said to his countrymen, "Go yachting; go cricketing; go boat-racing; go shooting; go horse-racing, nine months of the year, while the other Europeans go marching and drilling." Those occupations he considered good for us; and our much talking, writing, and thinking about them characteristic, and therefore good. And he was not one of those who do penance for that sweating indolence in the fits of desperate panic. Beauchamp's argument that the rich idler begets the idling vagabond, the rich wagerer the brutal swindler, the general thirst for a mad round of recreation a generally-increasing disposition to avoid serious

work, and the unbraced moral tone of the country an indifference to national responsibility (an argument doubtless extracted from Shrapnel, talk tall as the very demagogue when he stood upright), Mr. Romfrey laughed at scornfully, affirming that our manufactures could take care of themselves. As for invasion, we are circled by the sea. Providence has done that for us, and may be relied on to do more in an emergency.—The children of wealth and the children of the sun alike believe that Providence is for them, and it would seem that the former can do without it less than the latter, though the former are less inclined to give it personification.

This year, however, the array of armaments on the Continent made Mr. Romfrey anxious about our navy. Almost his first topic in welcoming Colonel Halkett and Cecilia to Steynham was the rottenness of navy administration; for if Providence is to do anything for us it must have a seaworthy fleet for the operation. How loudly would his contemptuous laughter have repudiated the charge that he trusted to supernatural agency for assistance in case of need! But so it was: and he owned to believing in English luck. Partly of course he meant that steady fire of combat which his countrymen have got heated to of old till fortune blessed them.

"Nevil is not here?" the colonel asked.

"No, I suspect he's gruelling and plastering a doctor of his acquaintance," Mr. Romfrey said, with his nasal laugh composed of scorn and resignation.

"Yes, yes, I've heard," said Colonel Halkett hastily.

He would have liked to be informed of Dr. Shrapnel's particular offence: he mentioned the execrable letter.

Mr. Romfrey complacently interjected: "Drug-vomit!" and after an interval: "Gallows!"

"That man has done Nevil Beauchamp a world of mischief, Romfrey."

"We'll hope for a cure, colonel."

"Did the man come across you?"

"He did."

Mr. Romfrey was mute on the subject. Colonel Halkett abstained from pushing his inquiries.

Cecilia could only tell her father when they were alone in the drawing-room a few minutes before dinner that Mrs. Culling was entirely ignorant of any cause to which Nevil's absence might be attributed.

"Mr. Romfrey had good cause," the colonel said emphatically.

He repeated it next day, without being a bit wiser of the cause.

Cecilia's happiness or hope was too sensitive to allow of a beloved father's deceiving her in his opposition to it. She saw clearly now that he had fastened on this miserable incident, expecting an imbroglio that would divide Nevil and his uncle, and be an excuse for dividing her and Nevil. O for the passionate will to make head against what appeared as a fate in this matter! She had it not.

Mr. and Mrs. Wardour-Devereux, Sir John and Lady Baskellett, and the Countess of Welshpool, another sister of Mr. Romfrey's, arrived at Steynham for a day and a night. Lady Baskellett and Lady Welshpool came to see their brother, not to countenance his household; and Mr. Wardour-Devereux could not stay longer than a certain number of hours under a roof where tobacco was in evil odour. From her friend Louise, his wife, Cecilia learnt that Mr. Lydiard had been summoned to Dr. Shrapnel's bedside, as Mrs. Devereux knew by a letter she had received from Mr. Lydiard, who was no political devotee of that man, she assured Cecilia, but had an extraordinary admiration for the Miss Denham living with him. This was kindly

intended to imply that Beauchamp was released from his attendance on Dr. Shrapnel, and also that it was not he whom the Miss Denham attracted.

"She is in Switzerland," said Cecilia.

"She is better there," said Mrs. Devereux.

Mr. Stukely Culbrett succeeded to these visitors. He heard of the case of Dr. Shrapnel from Colonel Halkett, and of Beauchamp's missing of his chance with the heiress from Mr. Romfrey.

Rosamund Culling was in great perplexity about Beauchamp's prolonged absence ; for he had engaged to come, he had written to her to say he would be sure to come ; and she feared he was ill. She would have persuaded Mr. Culbrett to go down to Bevis-ham to see him : she declared that she could even persuade herself to call on Dr. Shrapnel a second time, in spite of her horror of the man. Her anger at the thought of his keeping Nevil away from good fortune and happiness caused her to speak in resentment and loathing of the man.

"He behaved badly when you saw him, did he?" said Stukely.

"Badly, is no word. He is detestable," Rosamund replied.

"You think he ought to be whipped?"

She feigned an extremity of vindictiveness, and

twisted her brows in comic apology for the unfeminine sentiment, as she said: "I really do."

The feminine gentleness of her character was known to Stukely, so she could afford to exaggerate the expression of her anger, and she did not modify it, forgetful that a woman is the representative of the sex with cynical men, and escapes from contempt at the cost of her sisterhood.

Looking out of an upper window in the afternoon she beheld Nevil Beauchamp in a group with his uncle Everard, the colonel and Cecilia, and Mr. Culbrett. Nevil was on his feet; the others were seated under the great tulip-tree on the lawn.

A little observation of them warned her that something was wrong. There was a vacant chair; Nevil took it in his hand at times, stamped it to the ground, walked away and sharply back fronting his uncle, speaking vehemently, she perceived, and vainly, as she judged by the cast of his uncle's figure. Mr. Romfrey's head was bent, and wagged slightly, as he screwed his brows up and shot his eyes queerly at the agitated young man. Colonel Halkett's arms crossed his chest. Cecilia's eyelids drooped their lashes. Mr. Culbrett was balancing on the hind-legs of his chair. No one appeared to be speaking but Nevil.

It became evident that Nevil was putting a series of questions to his uncle. Mechanical nods were given him in reply.

Presently Mr. Romfrey rose, thundering out a word or two, without a gesture.

Colonel Halkett rose.

Nevil flung his hand out straight to the house.

Mr. Romfrey seemed to consent; the colonel shook his head: Nevil insisted.

A footman carrying a tea-tray to Miss Halkett received some commission and swiftly disappeared, making Rosamund wonder whether sugar, milk or cream had been omitted.

She met him on the first landing, and heard that Mr. Romfrey requested her to step out on the lawn.

Expecting to hear of a piece of misconduct on the part of the household servants, she hurried forth, and found that she had to traverse the whole space of the lawn up to the tulip-tree. Colonel Halkett and Mr. Romfrey had resumed their seats. The colonel stood up and bowed to her.

Mr. Romfrey said: "One question to you, ma'am, and you shall not be detained. Did not that man Shrapnel grossly insult you on the day you called on him to see Captain Beauchamp about a couple of months before the election?"

"Look at me when you speak, ma'am," said Beauchamp.

Rosamund looked at him.

The whiteness of his face paralyzed her tongue. A dreadful levelling of his eyes penetrated and chilled her. Instead of thinking of her answer she thought of what could possibly have happened.

"Did he insult you at all, ma'am?" said Beauchamp.

Mr. Romfrey reminded him that he was not a cross-examining criminal barrister.

They waited for her to speak.

She hesitated, coloured, betrayed confusion; her senses telling her of a catastrophe, her conscience accusing her as the origin of it.

"Did Dr. Shrapnel, to your belief, intentionally hurt your feelings or your dignity?" said Beauchamp, and made the answer easier:

"Not intentionally, surely: not I certainly do not accuse him."

"Can you tell me you feel that he wounded you in the smallest degree? And if so, how? I ask you this, because he is anxious, if he lives, to apologise to you for any offence that he may have been guilty of: he was ignorant of it. I have his word for that, and his commands to me to bear it

to you. I may tell you I have never known him injure the most feeble thing—anything alive, or wish to.”

Beauchamp’s voice choked. Rosamund saw tears leap out of the stern face of her dearest now in wrath with her.

“Is he ill?” she faltered.

“He is. You own to a strong dislike of him, do you not?”

“But not to desire any harm to him.”

“Not a whipping,” Mr. Culbrett murmured.

Everard Romfrey overheard it.

He had allowed Mrs. Culling to be sent for, that she might with a bare affirmative silence Nevil, when his conduct was becoming intolerable before the guests of the house.

“That will do, ma’am,” he dismissed her.

Beauchamp would not let her depart.

“I must have your distinct reply, and in Mr. Romfrey’s presence:—say, that if you accused him you were mistaken, or that they were mistaken who supposed you had accused him. I must have the answer before you go.”

“Sir, will you learn manners!” Mr. Romfrey said to him, with a rattle of the throat.

Beauchamp turned his face from her.

Colonel Halkett offered her his arm to lead her away.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" she whispered, scarcely able to walk, but declining the colonel's arm.

"You ought not to have been dragged out here," said he. "Anyone might have known there would be no convincing of Captain Beauchamp. That old rascal in Bevisham has been having a beating; that's all. And a very beautiful day it is!—a little too hot, though. Before we leave, you must give me a lesson or two in gardening."

"Dr. Shrapnel—Mr. Romfrey!" said Rosamund, half audibly under the oppression of the more she saw than what she said.

The colonel talked of her renown in landscape-gardening. He added casually: "They met the other day."

"By accident?"

"By chance, I suppose. Shrapnel defends one of your Steynham poaching vermin."

"Mr. Romfrey struck him?—for that? Oh, never!" Rosamund exclaimed.

"I suppose he had a long account to settle."

She fetched her breath painfully. "I shall never be forgiven."

“And I say that a gentleman has no business with idols,” the colonel fumed as he spoke. “Those letters of Shrapnel to Nevil Beauchamp are a scandal on the name of Englishman.”

“You have read that shocking one, Colonel Halkett?”

“Captain Baskellett read it out to us.”

“He? Oh! then . . .” She stopped:—Then the author of this mischief is clear to me! her divining hatred of Cecil would have said, but her humble position did not warrant such speech. A consideration of the lowliness necessitating this restraint at a moment when loudly to denounce another’s infamy with triumphant insight would have solaced and supported her, kept Rosamund dumb.

She could not bear to think of her part in the mischief. She was not bound to think of it, knowing actually nothing of the occurrence.

Still she felt that she was on her trial. She detected herself running in and out of her nature to fortify it against accusations rather than cleanse it for inspection. It was narrowing in her own sight. The prospect of her having to submit to a further interrogatory, shut it up entrenched in the declaration that Dr. Shrapnel had so far outraged

her sentiments as to be said to have offended her : not insulted, perhaps, but certainly offended.

And this was a generous distinction. It was generous ; and having recognised the generosity, she was unable to go beyond it.

She was presently making the distinction to Miss Halkett. The colonel had left her at the door of the house : Miss Halkett sought admission to her private room on an errand of condolence, for she had sympathized with her very much in the semi-indignity Nevil had forced her to undergo : and very little indeed had she been able to sympathize with Nevil, who had been guilty of the serious fault of allowing himself to appear moved by his own commonplace utterances ; or, in other words, the theme being hostile to his audience, he had betrayed emotion over it without first evoking the spirit of pathos.

“As for me,” Rosamund replied, to some comforting remarks of Miss Halkett’s, “I do not understand why I should be mixed up in Dr. Shrapnel’s misfortunes : I really am quite unable to recollect his words to me or his behaviour : I have only a positive impression that I left his house, where I had gone to see Captain Beauchamp, in utter disgust, so repelled by his language that I could hardly

trust myself to speak of the man to Mr. Romfrey when he questioned me. I did not volunteer it. I am ready to say that I believe Dr. Shrapnel did not intend to be insulting. I cannot say that he was not offensive. You know, Miss Halkett, I would willingly, gladly have saved him from anything like punishment."

"You are too gentle to have thought of it," said Cecilia.

"But I shall never be forgiven by Captain Beauchamp. I see in his eyes that he accuses me and despises me."

"He will not be so unjust, Mrs. Culling."

Rosamund begged that she might hear what Nevil had first said on his arrival.

Cecilia related that they had seen him walking swiftly across the park, and that Mr. Romfrey had hailed him, and held his hand out; and that Captain Beauchamp had overlooked it, saying he feared Mr. Romfrey's work was complete. He had taken her father's hand and hers: and his touch was like ice.

"His worship of that Dr. Shrapnel is extraordinary," quoth Rosamund. "And how did Mr. Romfrey behave to him?"

"My father thinks, very forbearingly."

Rosamund sighed and made a semblance of wring-

ing her hands. "It seems to me that I anticipated ever since I heard of the man . . . or at least ever since I saw him and heard him, he would be the evil genius of us all:—if I dare include myself. But I am not permitted to escape! And, Miss Halkett, can you tell me how it was that my name—that I became involved? I cannot imagine the circumstances which would bring me forward in this unhappy affair."

Cecilia replied: "The occasion was that Captain Beauchamp so scornfully contrasted the sort of injury done by Dr. Shrapnel's defence of a poacher on his uncle's estate, with the severe chastisement inflicted by Mr. Romfrey in revenge for it. He would not leave the subject."

"I see him—see his eyes!" cried Rosamund, her bosom heaving and sinking deep, as her conscience quavered within her. "At last Mr. Romfrey mentioned me?"

"He stood up and said you had been personally insulted by Dr. Shrapnel."

Rosamund meditated in a distressing doubt of her conscientious truthfulness.

"Captain Beauchamp will be coming to me; and how can I answer him? Heaven knows I would have shielded the poor man if possible—poor

wretch! Wicked though he is, one has only to hear of him suffering! But what can I answer? I do recollect now that Mr. Romfrey compelled me from question to question to confess that the man had vexed me. Insulted, I never said. At the worst, I said vexed. I would not have said insulted, or even offended, because Mr. Romfrey . . . ah! we know him. What I did say, I forget. I have no guide to what I said but my present feelings, and they are pity for the unfortunate man much more than dislike.—Well, I must go through the scene with Nevil!” Rosamund concluded her outcry of ostensible exculpation.

She asked in a cooler moment how it was that Captain Beauchamp had so far forgotten himself as to burst out on his uncle before the guests of the house. It appeared that he had wished his uncle to withdraw with him, and Mr. Romfrey had bidden him postpone private communications. Rosamund gathered from one or two words of Cecilia’s that Mr. Romfrey, until finally stung by Nevil, had indulged in his best-humoured banter.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FACE OF RENÉE.

SHORTLY before the ringing of the dinner-bell Rosamund knocked at Beauchamp's dressing-room door, the bearer of a telegram from Bevisham. He read it in one swift run of the eyes, and said: "Come in, ma'am, I have something for you. Madame de Rouaillout sends you this."

Rosamund saw her name written in a French hand on the back of the card.

"You stay with us, Nevil?"

"To-night and to-morrow, perhaps. The danger seems to be over."

"Has Dr. Shrapnel been in danger?"

"He has. If it's quite over now!"

"I declare to you, Nevil . . ."

"Listen to me, ma'am; I'm in the dark about this murderous business:—an old man, defenceless, harmless as a child!—but I know this, that you are somewhere in it."

“Nevil, do you not guess at some one else?”

“He! yes, he! But Cecil Baskett led no blind man to Dr. Shrapnel’s gate.”

“Nevil, as I live, I knew nothing of it!”

“No, but you set fire to the train. You hated the old man, and you taught Mr. Romfrey to think that you had been insulted. I see it all. Now you must have the courage to tell him of your error. There’s no other course for you. I mean to take Mr. Romfrey to Dr. Shrapnel, to save the honour of our family, as far as it can be saved.”

“What? Nevil!” exclaimed Rosamund, gaping.

“It seems little enough, ma’am. But he must go. I will have the apology spoken, and man to man.”

“But you would never tell your uncle that?”

He laughed in his uncle’s manner.

“But, Nevil, my dearest, forgive me, I think of you—why are the Halketts here? It is not entirely with Colonel Halkett’s consent. It is your uncle’s influence with him that gives you your chance. Do you not care to avail yourself of it? Ever since he heard Dr. Shrapnel’s letter to you, Colonel Halkett has, I am sure, been tempted to confound you with him in his mind:—ah! Nevil, but recollect that it is *only* Mr. Romfrey who can help to give you your Cecilia. There is no dispensing with him.

Postpone your attempt to humiliate—I mean, that is, Oh ! Nevil, whatever you intend to do to overcome your uncle ; trust to time, be friends with him ; be a little worldly ! for her sake ! to ensure her happiness ! ”

Beauchamp obtained the information that his cousin Cecil had read out the letter of Dr. Shrapnel at Mount Laurels.

The bell rang.

“ Do you imagine I should sit at my uncle’s table if I did not intend to force him to repair the wrong he has done to himself and to us ? ” he said.

“ Oh ! Nevil, do you not see Captain Baskelett at work here ? ”

“ What amends can Cecil Baskelett make ? My uncle is a man of honour : it is in his power. There, I leave you to speak to him ; you will do it to-night, after we break up in the drawing-room.”

Rosamund groaned : “ An apology to Dr. Shrapnel from Mr. Romfrey ! It is an impossibility, Nevil ! utter ! ”

“ So you say to sit idle : but do as I tell you.”

He went downstairs.

He had barely reproached her. She wondered at that ; and then remembered his alien sad half-smile in quitting the room.

Rosamund would not present herself at her lord's dinner-table when there were any guests at Steynham. She prepared to receive Miss Halkett in the drawing-room, as the guests of the house this evening chanced to be her friends.

Madame de Rouailout's present to her was a photograph of M. de Croisnel, his daughter and son in a group. Rosamund could not bear to look at the face of Renée, and she put it out of sight. But she had looked. She was reduced to look again.

Roland stood beside his father's chair; Renée sat at his feet, clasping his right hand. M. de Croisnel's fallen eyelids and unshorn white chin told the story of the family reunion. He was dying: his two children were nursing him to the end.

Decidedly Cecilia was a more beautiful woman than Renée: but on which does the eye linger longest—which draws the heart? a radiant landscape, where the tall ripe wheat flashes between shadow and shine in the stately march of summer, or the peep into dewy woodland on to dark water?

Dark-eyed Renée was not beauty but attraction; she touched the double chords within us which are we know not whether harmony or discord, but a divine discord if an uncertified harmony, memorable

beyond plain sweetness or majesty. There are touches of bliss in anguish that superhumanise bliss, touches of mystery in simplicity, of the eternal in the variable. These two chords of poignant antiphony she struck throughout the range of the hearts of men, and strangely interwoven them in vibrating unison. Only to look at her face, without hearing her voice, without the charm of her speech, was to feel it. On Cecilia's entering the drawing-room sola, while the gentlemen drank claret, Rosamund handed her the card of the photographic artist of Tours, mentioning no names.

"I should say the portrait is correct. A want of spirituality," Rosamund said critically, using one of the insular commonplaces, after that manner of fastening upon what there is *not* in a piece of art or nature.

Cecilia's avidity to see and study the face preserved her at a higher mark.

She knew the person instantly; had no occasion to ask who this was. She sat over the portrait blushing burningly: "And that is a brother?" she said.

"That is her brother Roland, and very like her, except in complexion," said Rosamund.

Cecilia murmured of a general resemblance in the

features. Renée enchained her. Though but a sun-shadow the vividness of this French face came out surprisingly; air was in the nostrils and speech flew from the tremulous mouth. The eyes? were they quivering with internal light, or were they set to seem so in the sensitive strange curves of the eyelids whose awakened lashes appeared to tremble on some borderland between lustreful significance and the mists? She caught at the nerves like certain aoristic combinations in music, like tones of a stringed instrument swept by the wind, enticing, unseizable. Yet she sat there at her father's feet gazing out into the world indifferent to spectators, indifferent even to the common sentiment of gracefulness. Her left hand clasped his right, and she supported herself on the floor with the other hand leaning away from him, to the destruction of conventional symmetry in the picture. None but a woman of consummate breeding dared have done as she did. It was not southern suppleness that saved her from the charge of harsh audacity, but something of the kind of genius in her mood which has hurried the greater poets of sound and speech to impose their naturalness upon accepted laws, or show the laws to have been our meagre limitations.

The writer will, however, be safest, and the excellent body of self-appointed thongmen, who walk up and down our ranks flapping their leathern straps to terrorize us from experiments in imagery, will best be satisfied by the statement that she was indescribable : a term that exacts no labour of mind from him or from them, for it flows off the pen as readily as it fills a vacuum.

That posture of Renée displeased Cecilia and fascinated her. In an exhibition of paintings she would have passed by it in pure displeasure : but here was Nevil's first love, the woman who loved him ; and she was French. After a continued study of her Cecilia's growing jealousy betrayed itself in a conscious rivalry of race, coming to the admission that Englishwomen cannot fling themselves about on the floor without agonizing the graces : possibly, too, they cannot look singularly without risks in the direction of slyness and brazen archness ; or talk animatedly without dipping in slang. Conventional situations preserve them and interchange dignity with them : still life befits them ; pre-eminently that judicial seat from which in briefest speech they deliver their judgments upon their foreign sisters. Jealousy it was that plucked Cecilia from her majestic place and caused her to

envy in Renée things she would otherwise have disapproved.

At last she had seen the French lady's likeness ! The effect of it was a horrid trouble in Cecilia's cool blood, abasement, a sense of eclipse, hardly any sense of deserving worthiness :—"What am I but an heiress !" Nevil had once called her beautiful ; his praise had given her beauty. But what is beauty when it is outshone ! Ask the owners of gems. You think them rich ; they are pining.

Then, too, this Renée, who looked electrical in repose, might really love Nevil with a love that sent her heart out to him in his enterprises, justifying and adoring him, piercing to the hero in his very thoughts. Would she not see that his championship of the unfortunate man Dr. Shrapnel was heroic ?

Cecilia surrendered the card to Rosamund, and it was out of sight when Beauchamp stepped into the drawing-room. His cheeks were flushed ; he had been one against three for the better part of an hour.

"Are you going to show me the downs to-morrow morning ?" Cecilia said to him ; and he replied, "You will have to be up early."

"What's that ?" asked the colonel, at Beauchamp's heels.

He was volunteering to join the party of two for the early morning's ride to the downs. Mr. Romfrey pressed his shoulder, saying, "There's no third horse can do it in my stables."

Colonel Halkett turned to him.

"I had your promise to come over the kennels with me and see how I treat a cry of mad dog, which is ninety-nine times out of a hundred mad fool man," Mr. Romfrey added.

By that the colonel knew he meant to stand by Nevil still and offer him his chance of winning Cecilia.

Having pledged his word not to interfere, Colonel Halkett submitted, and muttered, "Ah! the kennels." Considering however what he had been witnessing of Nevil's behaviour to his uncle, the colonel was amazed at Mr. Romfrey's magnanimity in not cutting him off and disowning him.

"Why the downs?" he said.

"Why the deuce, colonel?" A question quite as reasonable, and Mr. Romfrey laughed under his breath. To relieve an uncertainty in Cecilia's face that might soon have become confusion, he described the downs fronting the paleness of earliest dawn, and then their arch and curve and dip against the pearly grey of the half-glow; and then, among their

hollows, lo, the illumination of the east all around, and up and away, and a gallop for miles along the turfy thymy rolling billows, land to left, sea to right, below you. "It's the nearest hit to wings we can make, Cecilia." He surprised her with her Christian name, which kindled in her the secret of something he expected from that ride on the downs. —Compare you the Alps with them? If you could jump on the back of an eagle, you might. The Alps have height. But the downs have swiftness. Those long stretching lines of the downs are greyhounds in full career. To look at them is to set the blood racing! Speed is on the downs, glorious motion, odorous air of sea and herb, exquisite as in the isles of Greece. And the continental travelling ninnies leave England for health!—run off and forth from the downs to the steamboat, the railway, the steaming hotel, the tourist's shivering mountain-top, in search of sensations! There on the downs the finest and liveliest are at their bidding ready to fly through them like hosts of angels.

He spoke somewhat in that strain, either to relieve Cecilia or prepare the road for Nevil, not in his ordinary style; on the contrary, with a swing of enthusiasm that seemed to spring of

ancient heartfelt fervours. And indeed soon afterward he was telling her that there on those downs, in full view of Steynham, he and his wife had first joined hands.

Beauchamp sat silent. Mr. Romfrey dispatched orders to the stables, and Rosamund to the kitchen. Cecilia was rather dismayed by the formal preparations for the ride. She declined the early cup of coffee. Mr. Romfrey begged her to take it. "Who knows the hour when you'll be back?" he said. Beauchamp said nothing.

The room grew insufferable to Cecilia. She would have liked to be wafted to her chamber in a veil, so shamefully unveiled did she seem to be. But the French lady would have been happy in her place! Her father kissed her as fathers do when they hand the bride into the travelling carriage. His "Good night, my darling!" was in the voice of a soldier on duty. For a concluding sign that her dim apprehensions pointed correctly, Mr. Romfrey kissed her on the forehead. She could not understand how it had come to pass that she found herself suddenly on this incline, precipitated whither she would fain be going, only less hurriedly, less openly, and with her secret merely peeping, like a dove in the breast.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RIDE IN THE WRONG DIRECTION.

THAT pure opaque of the line of downs ran luminously edged against the pearly morning sky, with its dark landward face crepusculine yet clear in every combe, every dotting copse and furze-bush, every wavy fall, and the ripple, crease, and rill-like descent of the turf. Beauty of darkness was there, as well as beauty of light above.

Beauchamp and Cecilia rode forth before the sun was over the line, while the west and north-west sides of the rolling downs were stamped with such firmness of dusky feature as you see on the indentations of a shield of tarnished silver. The mounting of the sun behind threw an obscurer gloom, and gradually a black mask overcame them, until the rays shot among their folds and windings, and shadows rich as the black pansy, steady as on a dial-plate, rounded with the hour.

Mr. Everard Romfrey embraced this view from Steynham windows, and loved it. The lengths of gigantic 'greyhound backs' coursing along the south, were his vision of delight; no image of repose for him, but of the life in swiftness. He had known them when the great bird of the downs was not a mere tradition, and though he owned conscientiously to never having beheld the bird, a certain mystery of holiness hung about the region where the bird had been in his time. There, too, with a timely word he had gained a wealthy and good wife. He had now sent Nevil to do the same.

This astute gentleman had caught at the idea of a ride of the young couple to the downs with his customary alacrity of perception as being the very best arrangement for hurrying them to the point. At Steynham Nevil was sure to be howling all day over his tumbled joss Shrapnel. Once away in the heart of the downs, and Cecilia beside him, it was a matter of calculation that two or three hours of the sharpening air would screw his human nature to the pitch. In fact, unless each of them was reluctant, they could hardly return unbetrothed. Cecilia's consent was foreshadowed by her submission in going: Mr. Romfrey had noticed her fright at the suggestive formalities he cast round the ex-

pedition, and felt sure of her. Taking Nevil for a man who could smell the perfume of a ripe affirmative on the sweetest of lips, he was pretty well sure of him likewise. And then a truce to all that Radical raging and hot-pokering of the country! and lie in peace, old Shrapnel! and get on your legs when you can, and offend no more; especially be mindful not to let fly one word against a woman! With Cecilia for wife, and a year of marriage devoted to a son and heir, Nevil might be expected to resume his duties as a naval officer, and win an honourable name for the inheritance of the young one he kissed.

There was benevolence in these previsions of Mr. Romfrey, proving how good it is for us to bow to despotic authority, if only we will bring ourselves unquestioningly to accept the previous deeds of the directing hand.

Colonel Halkett gave up his daughter for lost when she did not appear at the breakfast-table: for yet more decidedly lost when the luncheon saw her empty place: and as time drew on toward the dinner-hour, he began to think her lost beyond hope, embarked for good and all with the madbrain. Some little hope of a dissension between the pair, arising from the natural antagonism of her strong

sense to Nevil's extravagance, had buoyed him until it was evident that they must have alighted at an inn to eat, which signified that they had overleaped the world and its hurdles, and were as dreamy a leash of lovers as ever made a dreamland of hard earth. The downs looked like dreamland through the long afternoon. They shone as in a veil of silk—softly fair, softly dark. No spot of harshness was on them save where a quarry south-westward gaped at the evening sun.

Red light struck into that round chalk maw, and the green slopes and channels and half-circle hollows were brought a mile-stride nigher Steynham by the level beams.

The poor old colonel fell to a more frequent repetition of the "Well!" with which he had been unconsciously expressing his perplexed mind in the kennels and through the covers during the day. None of the gentlemen went to dress. Mr. Culbrett was indoors conversing with Rosamund Culling.

"What's come to them?" the colonel asked of Mr. Romfrey, who said shrugging: "Something wrong with one of the horses." It had happened to him on one occasion to set foot in the hole of a baked hedgehog that had furnished a repast, not

without succulence, to some shepherd of the downs. Such a case might have recurred; it was more likely to cause an upset at a walk than at a gallop; or perhaps a shoe had been cast; and young people break no bones at a walking fall; ten to one if they do at their top speed. Horses manage to kill their seniors for them: the young are exempt from accident.

Colonel Halkett nodded and sighed: "I dare say they're safe. It's that man Shrapnel's letter—that letter, Romfrey! A private letter, I know; but I've not heard Nevil disown the opinions expressed in it. I submit. It's no use resisting. I treat my daughter as a woman capable of judging for herself. I repeat, I submit. I haven't a word against Nevil except on the score of his politics. I like him. All I have to say is, I don't approve of a republican and a sceptic for my son-in-law. I yield to you, and my daughter, if she!"

"I think she does, colonel. Marriage 'll cure the fellow. Nevil will slough his craze. Off! old coat. Cissy will drive him in strings. 'My wife!' I hear him." Mr. Romfrey laughed quietly. "It's all 'my country,' now. The dog 'll be uxorious. He wants fixing; nothing worse."

"How he goes on about Shrapnel!"

"I shouldn't think much of him if he didn't."

"You're one in a thousand, Romfrey. I object to seeing a man worshipped."

"It's Nevil's green-sickness, and Shrapnel's the god of it."

"I trust to heaven you're right. It seems to me young fellows ought to be out of it earlier."

"They generally are." Mr. Romfrey named some of the processes by which they are relieved of brain-flightiness, adding philosophically, "This way or that."

His quick ear caught a sound of hoofs cantering down the avenue on the northern front of the house.

He consulted his watch. "Ten minutes to eight. Say a quarter past for dinner. They're here, colonel."

Mr. Romfrey met Nevil returning from the stables. Cecilia had disappeared.

"Had a good day?" said Mr. Romfrey.

Beauchamp replied: "I'll tell you of it after dinner," and passed by him.

Mr. Romfrey edged round to Colonel Halkett, conjecturing in his mind: They have not hit it; as he remarked: "Breakfast and luncheon have been omitted in this day's fare," which appeared to

the colonel a confirmation of his worst fears, or rather the extinction of his last spark of hope.

He knocked at his daughter's door in going upstairs to dress.

Cecilia presented herself and kissed him.

"Well?" said he.

"By-and-by, papa," she answered. "I have a headache. Beg Mr. Romfrey to excuse me."

"No news for me?"

She had no news.

Mrs. Culling was with her. The colonel stepped on mystified to his room.

When the door had closed Cecilia turned to Rosamund and burst into tears. "Rosamund felt that it must be something grave indeed for the proud young lady so to betray a troubled spirit.

"He is ill—Dr. Shrapnel is very ill," Cecilia responded to one or two subdued inquiries in as clear a voice as she could command.

"Where have you heard of him?" Rosamund asked.

"We have been there."

"Bevisham? to Bevisham?" Rosamund was considering the opinion Mr. Romfrey would form of the matter from the point of view of his horses.

"It was Nevil's wish," said Cecilia.

"Yes? and you went with him," Rosamund encouraged her to proceed, gladdened at hearing her speak of Nevil by that name; "you have not been on the downs at all?"

Cecilia mentioned a junction railway station they had ridden to; and thence, boxing the horses, by train to Bevisham. Rosamund understood that some haunting anxiety had fretted Nevil during the night; in the morning he could not withstand it, and he begged Cecilia to change their destination, apparently with a vehemence of entreaty that had been irresistible, or else it was utter affection for him had reduced her to undertake the distasteful journey. She admitted that she was not the most sympathetic companion Nevil could have had on the way, either going or coming. She had not entered Dr. Shrapnel's cottage. Remaining on horseback she had seen the poor man reclining in his garden chair. Mr. Lydiard was with him, and also his ward Miss Denham, who had been summoned by telegraph by one of the servants from Switzerland. And Cecilia had heard Nevil speak of his uncle to her, and too humbly, she hinted. Nor had the expression of Miss Denham's countenance in listening to him pleased her: but it was true that a heavily burdened heart cannot be expected to look pleasing.

On the way home Cecilia had been compelled in some degree to defend Mr. Romfrey. Blushing through her tears at the remembrance of a past emotion that had been mixed with foresight, she confessed to Rosamund she thought it now too late to prevent a rupture between Nevil and his uncle. Had some one whom Nevil trusted and cared for taken counsel with him and advised him before uncle and nephew met to discuss this most unhappy matter, then there might have been hope. As it was, the fate of Dr. Shrapnel had gained entire possession of Nevil. Every retort of his uncle's in reference to it rose up in him: he used language of contempt neighbouring abhorrence: he stipulated for one sole thing to win back his esteem for his uncle; and that was, the apology to Dr. Shrapnel."

"And to-night," Cecilia concluded, "he will request Mr. Romfrey to accompany him to Bevis-ham to-morrow morning, to make the apology in person. He will not accept the slightest evasion. He thinks Dr. Shrapnel may die, and the honour of the family—what is it he says of it?" Cecilia raised her eyes to the ceiling, while Rosamund blinked in impatience and grief, just apprehending the alien state of the young lady's mind in her

absence of recollection, as well as her bondage in the effort to recollect accurately.

"Have you not eaten any food to-day, Miss Halkett?" she said; for it might be the want of food which had broken her and changed her manner.

Cecilia replied that she had ridden for an hour to Mount Laurels.

"Alone? Mr. Romfrey must not hear of that," said Rosamund.

Cecilia consented to lie down on her bed. She declined the dainties Rosamund pressed on her. She was feverish with a deep and unconcealed affliction, and behaved as if her pride had gone. But if her pride had gone she would have eased her heart by sobbing outright. A similar division harassed her as when her friend Nevil was the candidate for Bevisham. She condemned his extreme wrath with his uncle, yet was attracted and enchained by the fire of passionate attachment which aroused it: and she was conscious that she had but shown obedience to his wishes throughout the day, not sympathy with his feelings. Under cover of a patient desire to please she had nursed irritation and jealousy; the degradation of the sense of jealousy increasing the irritation. Having

consented to the ride to Dr. Shrapnel, should she not, to be consistent, have dismounted there? O half heart! A whole one, though it be an erring, like that of the French lady, does at least live, and has a history, and makes music: but the faint and uncertain is jarred in action, jarred in memory, ever behind the day and in the shadow of it! Cecilia reviewed herself: jealous, disappointed, vexed, ashamed, she had been all day a graceless companion, a bad actress: and at the day's close she was loving Nevil the better for what had dissatisfied, distressed, and wounded her. She was loving him in emulation of his devotedness to another person: and that other was a revolutionary common people's doctor! an infidel, a traitor to his country's dearest interests! But Nevil loved him, and it had become impossible for her not to covet the love, or to think of the old offender without the halo cast by Nevil's attachment being upon him. So intensely was she moved by her intertwisting reflections that in an access of bodily fever she stood up and moved before the glass, to behold the image of the woman who could be the victim of these childish emotions: and no wonderful contrast struck her eyes; she appeared to herself as poor and small as they. How could she aspire to a man like Nevil

Beauchamp? If he had made her happy by wooing her she would not have adored him as she did now. He likes my hair, she said, smoothing it out, and then pressing her temples, like one insane. Two minutes afterward she was telling Rosamund her head ached less.

"This terrible Dr. Shrapnel!" Rosamund exclaimed, but reported that no loud voices were raised in the dining-room.

Colonel Halkett came to see his daughter, full of anxiety and curiosity. Affairs had been peaceful below, for he was ignorant of the expedition to Bevisham. On hearing of it he frowned, questioned Cecilia as to whether she had set foot on that man's grounds, then said: "Ah! well, we leave to-morrow: I must go, I have business at home; I can't delay it. I sanctioned no calling there, nothing of the kind. From Steynham to Bevisham? Goodness! it's rank madness. I'm not astonished you're sick and ill."

He waited till he was assured Cecilia had no special matter to relate, and recommending her to drink the tea Mrs. Culling had made for her, and then go to bed and sleep, he went down to the drawing-room, charged with the worst form of hostility toward Nevil, the partly diplomatic.

Cecilia smiled at her father's mention of sleep. She was in the contest of the two men, however inanimately she might be lying overhead, and the assurance in her mind that neither of them would give ground, so similar were they in their tenacity of will, dissimilar in all else, dragged her this way and that till she swayed lifeless between them. One may be as a weed of the sea while one's fate is being decided. To love is to be on the sea, out of sight of land: to love a man like Nevil Beauchamp is to be on the sea in tempest. Still to persist in loving would be noble, and but for this humiliation of utter helplessness an enviable power. Her thoughts ran thus in shame and yearning and regret, dimly discerning where her heart failed in the strength which was Nevil's, though it was a full heart, faithful and not void of courage. But *he* never brooded, he never blushed from insufficiency—the faintness of a desire, the callow passion that cannot fly and feed itself: he never tottered; he walked straight to his mark. She set up his image and Renée's, and cowered under the heroical shapes till she felt almost extinct. With her weak limbs and head worthlessly paining, the little infantile I within her ceased to wail, dwindled beyond sensation. Rosamund, waiting on her in the place

of her maid, saw two big drops come through her closed eyelids, and thought that if it could be granted to Nevil to look for a moment on this fair and proud young lady's loveliness in abandonment, it would tame, melt, and save him. The gods presiding over custom do not permit such renovating sights to men.

CHAPTER XVII.

PURSUIT OF THE APOLOGY OF MR. ROMFREY TO
DR. SHRAPNEL.

THE contest, which was an alternation of hard hitting and close wrestling, had recommenced when Colonel Halkett stepped into the drawing-room.

"Colonel, I find they've been galloping to Bevis-ham and back," said Mr. Romfrey.

"I've heard of it," the colonel replied. Not perceiving a sign of dissatisfaction on his friend's face, he continued : "To that man Shrapnel."

"Cecilia did not dismount," said Beauchamp.

"You took her to that man's gate. It was not with my sanction. You know my ideas of the man."

"If you were to see him now, colonel, I don't think you would speak harshly of him."

"We're not obliged to go and look on men who have had their measure dealt them."

"Barbarously," said Beauchamp.

Mr. Romfrey in the most placid manner took a chair. "Windy talk, that!" he said.

Colonel Halkett seated himself. Stukely Culbrett turned a sheet of manuscript he was reading.

Beauchamp began a caged lion's walk on the rug under the mantelpiece.

"I shall not spare you from hearing what I think of it, sir."

"We've had what you think of it twice over," said Mr. Romfrey. "I suppose it was the first time for information, the second time for emphasis, and the rest counts to keep it alive in your recollection."

"This is what you have to take to heart, sir; that Dr. Shrapnel is now seriously ill."

"I'm sorry for it, and I'll pay the doctor's bill."

"You make it hard for me to treat you with respect."

"Fire away. Those Radical friends of yours have to learn a lesson, and it's worth a purse to teach them that a lady, however feeble she may seem to them, is exactly of the strength of the best man of her acquaintance."

"That's well said!" came from Colonel Halkett.

Beauchamp stared at him, amazed by the commendation of empty language.

"You acted in error ; barbarously, but in error," he addressed his uncle.

"And you have got a fine topic for mouthing," Mr. Romfrey rejoined.

"You mean to sit still under Dr. Shrapnel's forgiveness?"

"He's taken to copy the Christian religion, has he?"

"You know you were deluded when you struck him."

"Not a whit."

"Yes, you know it now : Mrs. Culling——"

"Drag in no women ! Nevil Beauchamp."

"She has confessed to you that Dr. Shrapnel neither insulted her nor meant to ruffle her."

"She has done no such nonsense."

"If she has not ! — but I trust her to have done it."

"You play the trumpeter, you terrorize her."

"Into opening her lips wider ; nothing else. I'll have the truth from her, and no mincing : and from Cecil Baskellett and Palmet."

"Give Cecil a second licking, if you can, and have him off to Shrapnel."

"You!" cried Beauchamp.

At this juncture Stukely Culbrett closed the manuscript in his hands, and holding it out to Beauchamp, said: "Here's your letter, Nevil. It's tolerably hard to decipher. It's mild enough; it's middling good pulpit. I like it."

"What have you got there?" Colonel Halkett asked him.

"A letter of his friend Dr. Shrapnel on the Country. Read a bit, colonel."

"I? That letter! Mild, do you call it?" The colonel started back his chair in declining to touch the letter.

"Try it," said Stukely. "It's the letter they have been making the noise about. It ought to be printed. There's a hit or two at the middle-class that I should like to see in print. It's really not bad pulpit; and I suspect that what you object to, colonel, is only the dust of a well-thumped cushion. Shrapnel thumps with his fist. He doesn't say much that's new. If the parsons were men they'd be saying it every Sunday. If they did, colonel, I should hear you saying amen."

"Wait till they do say it."

"That's a long stretch. They're turncocks of one Water-company—to wash the greasy citizens!"

“You’re keeping Nevil on the gape,” said Mr. Romfrey, with a whimsical shrewd cast of the eye at Beauchamp, who stood alert not to be foiled, arrow-like in look and readiness to repeat his home-shot. Mr. Romfrey wanted to hear more of that unintelligible “You!” of Beauchamp’s. But Stukely Culbrett intended that the latter should be foiled, and he continued his diversion from the angry subject.

“We’ll drop the sacerdotal,” he said. “They’re behind a veil for us, and so are we for them. I’m with you, colonel; I wouldn’t have them persecuted; they sting fearfully when whipped. No one listens to them now except the class that goes to sleep under them, to ‘set an example’ to the class that can’t understand them. Shrapnel is like the breeze shaking the turf-grass outside the church doors; a trifle fresher. He knocks nothing down.”

“He can’t!” ejaculated the colonel.

“He sermonizes to shake, that’s all. I know the kind of man.”

“Thank heaven, it’s not a common species in England!”

“Common enough to be classed.”

Beauchamp struck through the conversation of

the pair: "Can I see you alone to-night, sir, or to-morrow morning?"

"You may catch me where you can," was Mr. Romfrey's answer.

"Where's that? It's for your sake and mine, not for Dr. Shrapnel's. I have to speak to you, and must. You have done your worst with him; you can't undo it. You have to think of your honour as a gentleman. I intend to treat you with respect, but wolf is the title now, whether I say it or not."

"Shrapnel's a rather long-legged sheep?"

"He asks for nothing from you."

"He would have got nothing, at a cry of peccavi!"

"He was innocent, perfectly blameless; he would not lie to save himself. You mistook that for—but you were an engine shot along a line of rails. He does you the justice to say you acted in error."

"And you're his parrot."

"He pardons you."

"Ha! t'other cheek!"

"You went on that brute's errand in ignorance. Will you keep to the character now you know the truth? Hesitation about it doubles the infamy."

An old man ! the best of men ! the kindest and truest ! the most unselfish ! ”

“ He tops me by half a head, and he’s my junior.”

Beauchamp suffered himself to give out a groan of sick derision : “ Ah ! ”

“ And it was no joke holding him tight,” said Mr. Romfrey, “ I’d as lief snap an ash. The fellow (he leaned round to Colonel Halkett) must be a fellow of a fine constitution. And he took his punishment like a man. I’ve known worse : and far worse : gentlemen by birth. There’s the choice of taking it upright or fighting like a rabbit with a weasel in his hole. Leave him to think it over, he’ll come right. I think no harm of him, I’ve no animus. A man must have his lesson at some time of life. I did what I had to do.”

“ Look here, Nevil,” Stukely Culbrett checked Beauchamp in season : “ I beg to inquire what Dr. Shrapnel means by ‘ the people.’ We have in our country the nobles and the squires, and after them, as I understand it, the people : that’s to say, the middle-class and the working-class—fat and lean. I’m quite with Shrapnel when he lashes the fleshpots. They want it, and they don’t get it from ‘ their organ,’ the Press. I fancy you and I agree about their organ ; the dimmallest organ that ever

ground a hackneyed set of songs and hymns to madden the thoroughfares."

"The Press of our country!" interjected Colonel Halkett in moaning parenthesis.

"It's the week-day Parson of the middle-class colonel. They have their thinking done for them as the Chinese have their dancing. But, Nevil, your Dr. Shrapnel seems to treat the traders as identical with the aristocracy in opposition to his 'people.' The traders are the cursed middlemen, bad friends of the 'people,' and infernally treacherous to the nobles till money hoists them. It's they who pull down the country. They hold up the nobles to the hatred of the democracy, and the democracy to scare the nobles. One's when they want to swallow a privilege, and the other's when they want to ring-fence their gains. How is it Shrapnel doesn't expose the trick? He must see through it. I like that letter of his. People is one of your Radical big words that burst at a query. He can't mean Quince, and Bottom, and Starveling, Christopher Sly, Jack Cade, Caliban, and poor old Hodge? No, no, Nevil. Our clowns are the stupidest in Europe. They can't cook their meals. They can't spell; they can scarcely speak. They haven't a jig in their legs. And I

believe they're losing their grin ! They're nasty when their blood's up. Shakespeare's Cade tells you what he thought of Radicalizing the people. ' And as for your mother, I'll make her a duke ; ' that's one of their songs. The word people, in England, is a dyspeptic agitator's dream when he falls nodding over the red chapter of French history. Who won the great liberties for England ? My book says, the nobles. And who made the great stand later ?—the squires. What have the middlemen done but bid for the people they despise and fear, dishonour us abroad and make a hash of us at home ? Shrapnel sees that. Only he has got the word people in his mouth. The people of England, my dear fellow, want *heading*. Since the traders obtained power we have been a country on all fours. Of course Shrapnel sees it : I say so. But talk to him and teach him where to look for the rescue."

Colonel Halkett said to Stukely : " If you have had a clear idea in what you have just spoken, my head's no place for it ! "

Stukely's unusually lengthy observations had somewhat heated him, and he protested with earnestness : " It was pure Tory, my dear colonel."

But the habitually and professedly cynical should

not deliver themselves at length: for as soon as they miss their customary incision of speech they are apt to aim to recover it in loquacity, and thus it may be that the survey of their ideas becomes disordered.

Mr. Culbrett endangered his reputation for epigram in a good cause, it shall be said.

These interruptions were torture to Beauchamp. Nevertheless the end was gained. He sank into a chair silent.

Mr. Romfrey wished to have it out with his nephew, of whose comic appearance as a man full of thunder, and occasionally rattling, yet all the while trying to be decorous and politic, he was getting tired. He foresaw that a tussle between them in private would possibly be too hot for his temper, admirably under control though it was.

"Why not drag Cecil to Shrapnel?" he said, for a provocation.

Beauchamp would not be goaded.

Colonel Halkett remarked that he would have to leave Steynham the next day. His host remonstrated with him. The colonel said: "Early." He had very particular business at home. He was positive, and declined every inducement to stay. Mr. Romfrey glanced at Nevil, thinking,

You poor fool ! And then he determined to let the fellow have five minutes alone with him.

This occurred at midnight, in that half-armoury, half-library, which was his private room.

Rosamund heard their voices below. She cried out to herself that it was her doing, and blamed her beloved, and her master and Dr. Shrapnel, in the breath of her self-recrimination. The demagogue, the over-punctilious gentleman, the faint lover, surely it must be reason wanting in the three for each of them in turn to lead the other, by an excess of some sort of the quality constituting their men's natures, to wreck a calm life and stand in contention ! Had Shrapnel been commonly reasonable he would have apologized to Mr. Romfrey, or had Mr. Romfrey, he would not have resorted to force to punish the supposed offender, or had Nevil, he would have held his peace until he had gained his bride. As it was, the folly of the three knocked at her heart, uniting to bring the heavy accusation against one poor woman, quite in the old way : the *Who is she ?* of the mocking Spaniard at mention of a social catastrophe. Rosamund had a great deal of the pride of her sex, and she resented any slur on it. She felt almost superciliously toward Mr. Romfrey and Nevil for their

not taking hands to denounce the plotter, Cecil Baskett. They seemed a pair of victims to him, nearly as much so as the wretched man Shrapnel. It was their senselessness which made her guilty! And simply because she had uttered two or three exclamations of dislike of a revolutionary and infidel she was compelled to groan under her present oppression! Is there anything to be hoped of men? Rosamund thought bitterly of Nevil's idea of their progress. Heaven help them! But the unhappy creatures have ceased to look to a heaven for help.

We see the consequence of it in this Shrapnel complication!

Three men: and one struck down; the other defeated in his benevolent intentions; the third sacrificing fortune and happiness: all three owing their mischance to one or other of the vague ideas disturbing men's heads! Where shall we look for mother wit?—or say, common suckling's instinct? Not to men, thought Rosamund.

She was listening to the voices of Mr. Romfrey and Beauchamp in a fever. Ordinarily the lord of Steynham was not out of his bed later than twelve o'clock at night. His door opened at half-past one. Not a syllable was exchanged by the

couple in the hall. They had fought it out. Mr. Romfrey came upstairs alone, and on the closing of his chamber-door she slipped down to Beauchamp and had a dreadful hour with him that subdued her disposition to sit in judgment upon men. The unavailing attempt to move his uncle had wrought him to the state in which passionate thoughts pass into speech like heat to flame. Rosamund strained her mental sight to gain a conception of his prodigious horror of the treatment of Dr. Shrapnel, that she might think him sane: and to retain a vestige of comfort in her bosom she tried to moderate and make light of as much as she could conceive. Between the two efforts she had no sense but that of helplessness. Once more she was reduced to promise that she would speak the whole truth to Mr. Romfrey, even to the fact that she had experienced a common woman's jealousy of Dr. Shrapnel's influence, and had alluded to him jealously, spitefully, and falsely. There was no mercy in Beauchamp. He was for action at any cost, with all the forces he could gather, and without delays. He talked of Cecilia as his uncle's bribe to him. Rosamund could hardly trust her ears when he informed her he had told his uncle of his determination to compel him to accomplish the act

of penitence. "Was it prudent to *say* it, Nevil?" she asked. But, as in his politics, he disdained prudence. A monstrous crime had been committed, involving the honour of the family:—no subtlety of insinuation, no suggestion, could wean him from the fixed idea that the apology to Dr. Shrapnel must be spoken by his uncle in person.

"If one could only *imagine* Mr. Romfrey doing it!" Rosamund groaned.

"He shall: and you will help him," said Beauchamp.

"If you loved a woman half as much as you do that man!"

"If I knew a woman as good, as wise, as noble as he!"

"You are losing her."

"You expect me to go through ceremonies of courtship at a time like this! If she cares for me she will feel with me. Simple compassion—but let Miss Halkett be. I'm afraid I overtasked her in taking her to Bevisham. She remained outside the garden. Ma'am, she is unsullied by contact with a single shrub of Dr. Shrapnel's territory."

"Do not be so bitterly ironical, Nevil. You have not seen her as I have."

Rosamund essayed a tender sketch of the fair

young lady, and fancied that she drew forth a sigh; she would have coloured the sketch, but he commanded her to hurry off to bed, and think of her morning's work.

A commission of which we feel we can accurately forecast the unsuccessful end is not likely to be undertaken with an ardour that might perhaps astound the presaging mind with unexpected issues. Rosamund fulfilled hers in the style of one who has learnt a lesson, and, exactly as she had anticipated, Mr. Romfrey accused her of coming to him from a conversation with that fellow Nevil overnight. He shrugged and left the house for his morning's walk across the fields.

Colonel Halkett and Cecilia beheld him from the breakfast-room returning with Beauchamp, who had waylaid him and was hammering his part in the now-endless altercation. It could be descried at any distance; and how fine was Mr. Romfrey's bearing!—truly noble by contrast, as of a grave big dog worried by a small barking dog. There is to an unsympathetic observer an intense vexatiousness in the exhibition of such pertinacity. To a soldier accustomed at a glance to estimate powers of attack and defence, this repeated puny assailing of a fortress that required years of siege was in

addition ridiculous. Mr. Romfrey appeared impregnable, and Beauchamp mad. "He's foaming again!" said the colonel, and was only ultra-pictorial. "Before breakfast!" was a further slur on Beauchamp.

Mr. Romfrey was elevated by the extraordinary comicality of the notion of the proposed apology to heights of humour beyond laughter, whence we see the unbounded capacity of the general man for folly, and rather commiserate than deride him. He was quite untroubled. It demanded a steady view of the other side of the case to suppose of one whose control of his temper was perfect, that he could be in the wrong. He at least did not think so, and Colonel Halkett relied on his common sense. Beauchamp's brows were smouldering heavily, except when he had to talk. He looked palish and worn, and said he had been up early. Cecilia guessed that he had not been to bed.

It was dexterously contrived by her host, in spite of the colonel's manifest anxiety to keep them asunder, that she should have some minutes with Beauchamp out in the gardens. Mr. Romfrey led them out, and then led the colonel away to offer him a choice of pups of rare breed.

“Nevil,” said Cecilia, “you will not think it presumption in me to give you advice?”

Her counsel to him was, that he should leave Steynham immediately, and trust to time for his uncle to reconsider his conduct.

Beauchamp urged the counter-argument of the stain on the family honour.

She hinted at expediency; he frankly repudiated it.

The downs faced them, where the heavenly vast ‘might have been’ of yesterday wandered thinner than a shadow of to-day; weaving a story without beginning, crisis, or conclusion, flowerless and fruitless, but with something of infinite in it sweeter to brood on than the future of her life to Cecilia.

“If meanwhile Dr. Shrapnel should die, and repentance comes too late!” said Beauchamp.

She had no clear answer to that, save the hope of its being an unfounded apprehension. “As far as it is in my power, Nevil, I will avoid injustice to him in my thoughts.”

He gazed at her thankfully. “Well,” said he, “that’s like sighting the cliffs. But I don’t feel home round me while the colonel is so strangely prepossessed. For a high-spirited gentleman like your father to approve, or at least accept, an act

so barbarous is incomprehensible. Speak to him, Cecilia, will you? Let him know your ideas."

She assented. He said instantly, "Persuade him to speak to my uncle Everard."

She was tempted to smile.

"I must do only what I think wise, if I am to be of service, Nevil."

"True, but paint that scene to him. An old man, utterly defenceless, making no defence! a cruel error! The colonel can't, or he doesn't, clearly get it inside him, otherwise I'm certain it would revolt him: just as I'm certain my uncle Everard is at this moment a stone-blind man. If he has done a thing, he can't question it, won't examine it. The thing becomes a part of him, as much as his hand or his head. He's a man of the twelfth century. Your father might be helped to understand him first."

"Yes," she said, not very warmly, though sadly.

"Tell the colonel how it must have been brought about. For Cecil Baskett called on Dr. Shrapnel two days before Mr. Romfrey stood at his gate."

The name of Cecil caused her to draw in her shoulders in a half-shudder. "It may indeed be Captain Baskett who set this cruel thing in motion!"

"Then point that out to your father," said he, perceiving a chance of winning her to his views through a concrete object of her dislike, and cooling toward the woman who betrayed a vulgar characteristic of her sex; who was merely woman, unable sternly to recognise the doing of a foul wrong because of her antipathy, until another antipathy enlightened her.

He wanted in fact a ready-made heroine, and did not give her credit for the absence of fire in her blood, as well as for the unexercised imagination which excludes young women from the power to realise unwonted circumstances. We men walking about the world have perhaps no more imagination of matters not domestic than they; but what we have is quick with experience: we see the thing we hear of: women come to it how they can.

Cecilia was recommended to weave a narrative for her father, and ultimately induce him, if she could, to give a gentleman's opinion of the case to Mr. Romfrey.

Her sensitive ear caught a change of tone in the directions she received. "Your father will say so and so: answer him with this and that." Beauchamp supplied her with phrases. She was to renew and renew the attack; hammer as he did.

Yesterday she had followed him : to-day she was to march beside him—hardly as an equal. Patience ! was the word she would have uttered in her detection of the one frailty in his nature which this hurrying of her off her feet opened her eyes to with unusual perspicacity. Still she leaned to him sufficiently to admit that he had grounds for a deep disturbance of his feelings.

He said : “I go to Dr. Shrapnel’s cottage, and don’t know how to hold up my head before Miss Denham. She confided him to me when she left for Switzerland !”

There was that to be thought of, certainly.

Colonel Halkett came round a box-bush and discovered them pacing together in a fashion to satisfy his paternal scrutiny.

“I’ve been calling you several times, my dear,” he complained. “We start in seven minutes. Bustle and bonnet at once. Nevil, I’m sorry for this business. Good-bye. Be a good boy, Nevil,” he murmured kind-heartedly, and shook Beauchamp’s hand with the cordiality of an extreme relief in leaving him behind.

The colonel and Mr. Romfrey and Beauchamp were standing on the hall-steps when Rosamund beckoned the latter and whispered a request for

that letter of Dr. Shrapnel's. "It is for Miss Halkett, Nevil."

He plucked the famous epistle from his bulging pocket-book, and added a couple of others in the same handwriting.

"Tell her, a first reading—it's difficult to read at first," he said, and burned to read it to Cecilia himself: to read it to her with his comments and explanations appeared imperative. It struck him in a flash that Cecilia's counsel to him to quit Steynham for awhile was good. And if he went to Bevisham he would be assured of Dr. Shrapnel's condition: notes and telegrams from the cottage were too much tempered to console and deceive him.

"Send my portmanteau and bag after me to Bevisham," he said to Rosamund, and announced to the woefully astonished colonel that he would have the pleasure of journeying in his company as far as the town.

"Are you ready? No packing?" said the colonel.

"It's better to have your impediments in the rear of you, and march!" said Mr. Romfrey.

Colonel Halkett declined to wait for anybody. He shouted for his daughter. The lady's maid appeared, and then Cecilia with Rosamund.

“We can’t entertain you, Nevil; we’re away to the island: I’m sorry,” said the colonel; and observing Cecilia’s face in full crimson, he looked at her as if he had lost a battle by the turn of events at the final moment.

Mr. Romfrey handed Cecilia into the carriage. He exchanged a friendly squeeze with the colonel, and offered his hand to his nephew. Beauchamp passed him with a nod and “Good-bye, sir.”

“Have ready at Holdesbury for the middle of the month,” said Mr. Romfrey, unruffled, and bowed to Cecilia.

“If you think of bringing my cousin Baskellett, give me warning, sir,” cried Beauchamp.

“Give me warning, if you want the house for Shrapnel,” replied his uncle, and remarked to Rosamund, as the carriage wheeled round the mounded laurels to the avenue, “He mayn’t be quite cracked. The fellow seems to have a turn for catching his opportunity by the tail. He’d better hold fast, for it’s his last!”

END OF VOL. II.

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